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THE GOLD-FIELDS OF ALASKA

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LONDON

THE AUTHOR IN TCHUKTCHI DRESS

THROUGH THE

GOLDFIELDS OF ALASKA

TO

BERING STRAITS

BY

HARRY DE WINDT, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "FROM PEKIN TO CALAIS BY LAND," "A RIDE TO INDIA
AND HOME," "NEW SIBERIA," "SIBERIA AS IT IS," ETC.

WITH A MAP AND 33 ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
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TO

H. C.

THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

Had my original scheme succeeded, this work would have borne the alluring title of 'New York to Paris by Land': a journey which, so far as I know, has never yet been accomplished, though I do not, for one moment, suggest that it never will be. My cloud, however, has its silver lining, seeing that the first part of our voyage lay through a region then known by name to perhaps a dozen white men, but now a byword throughout the civilised world: Klondike. I may add that Harding and I were the first Europeans to reside for any length of time alone and unprotected among the Tchuktchis of Siberia. But for these facts this book might well have been entitled 'The Record of a Failure.'

HARRY de WINDT.

Paris: *Christmas Day*, 1897.

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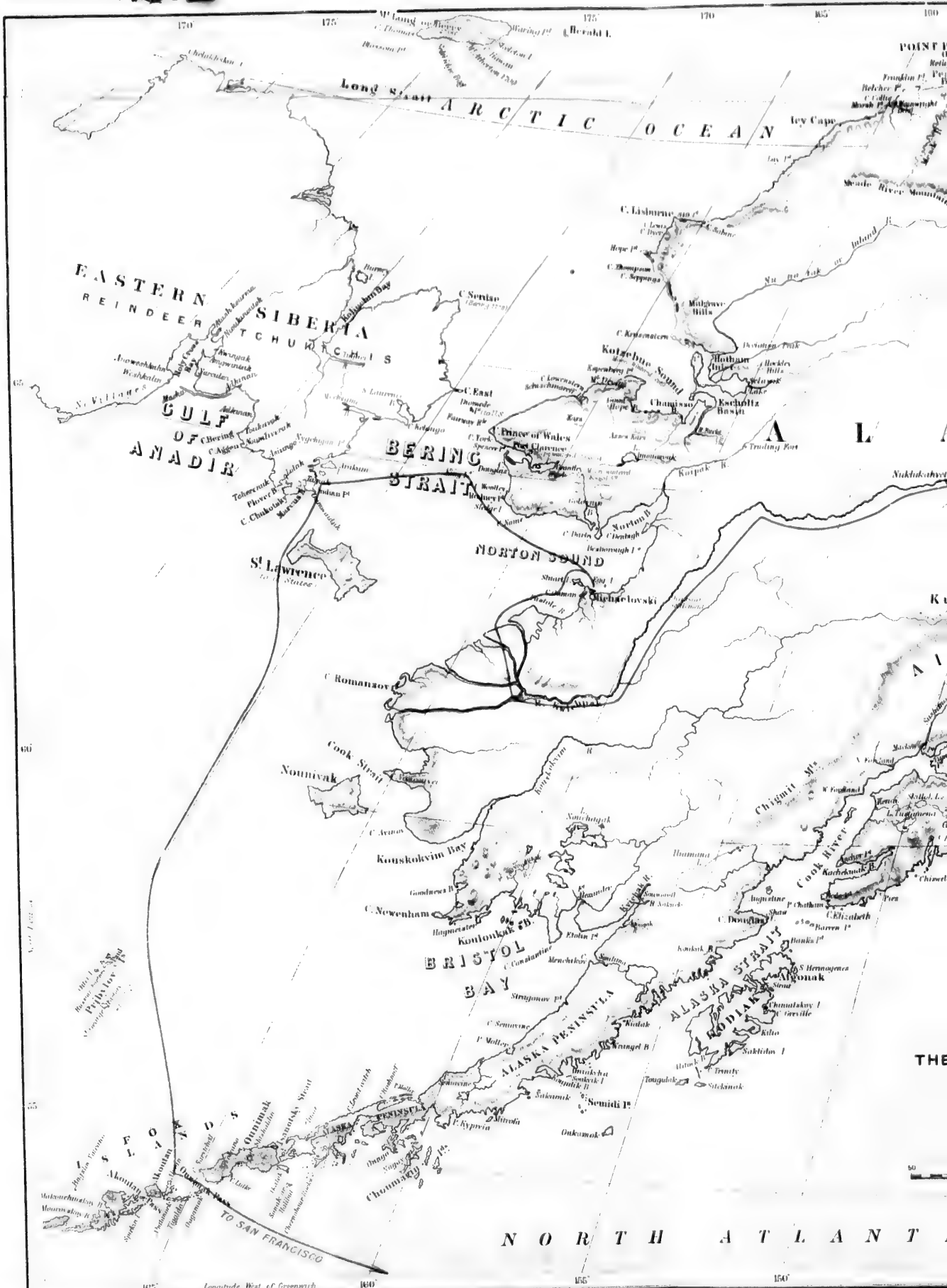
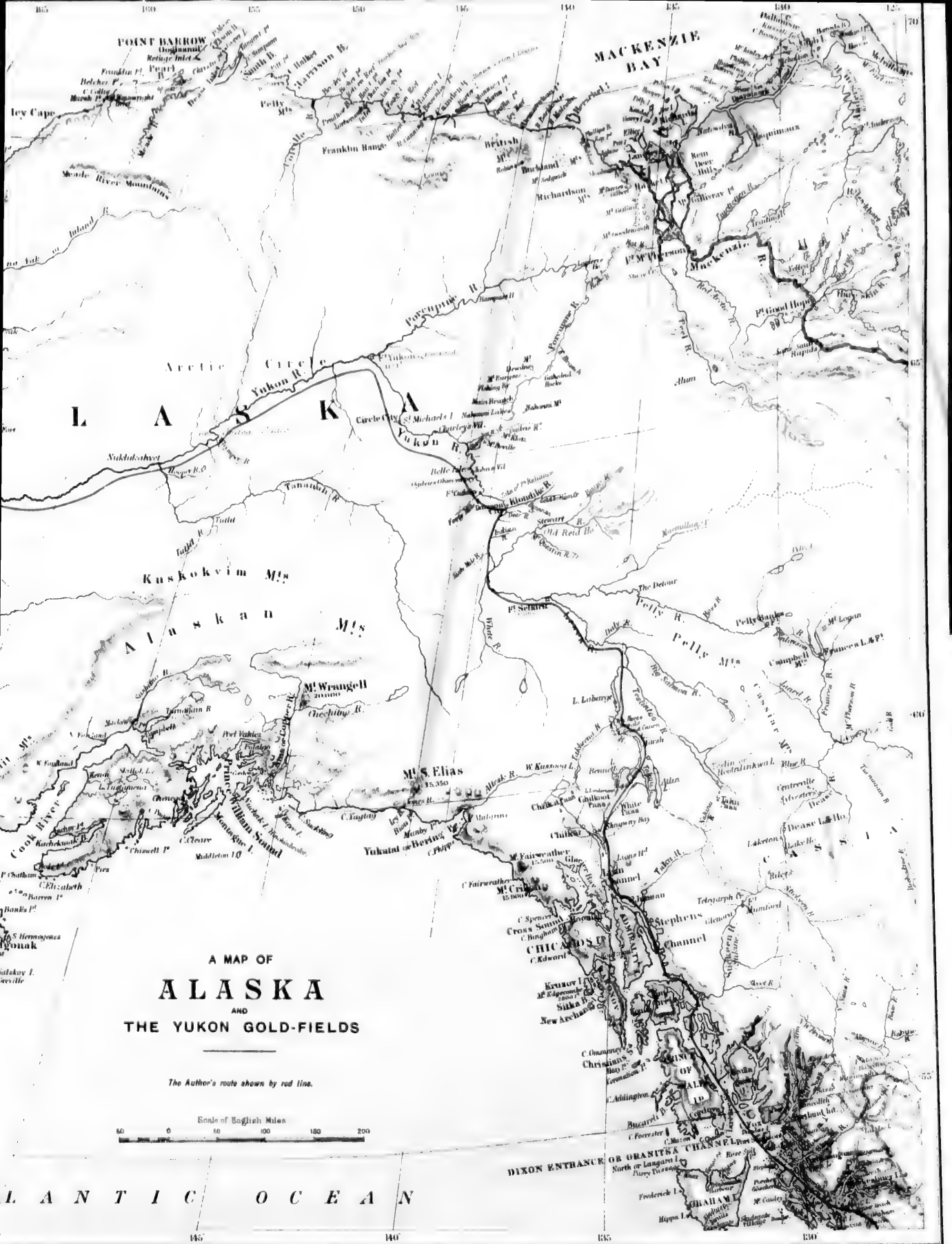
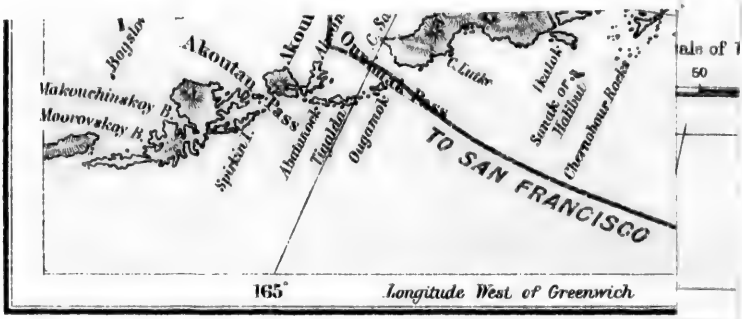

Long Strait
ARCTIC OCEAN
Icy Cape
Point B
EASTERN SIBERIA
REINDEER TCHUKTCHIS
C. Serdtse
Kotzebue Sound
Hotham Inlet
Eschholtz Bay
Chamisso I.
Prince of Wales
Fort Clarence
BERING STRAIT
GULF OF ANADIR
St. Lawrence
NORTON SOUND
Nuklukahyet
C. Romanzof
Cook Strait
Nunivak
Kouskokvim Bay
C. Newenham
Kuskokwim B.
BRISTOL BAY
Pribilof Islands
ALASKA PENINSULA
Unimak
Unalaska
Akutan
Ounalaska
TO SAN FRANCISCO
Chignik Mts
Cook River
C. Douglas
C. Elizabeth
Kachekmak B.
Augustine I.
Barren Is.
Banks I.
Afognak
Kodiak
Kiliuda B.
Sakkidon I.
Trinity
Stepovak B.
Semidi Is.
Onkamok
NORTH ATLANTIC
Longitude West of Greenwich
London: Chatto & Windus


A MAP OF
ALASKA
AND
THE YUKON GOLD-FIELDS
The Author's route shown by red line.
Scale of English Miles
50 0 50 100 150 200
POINT BARROW
Icy Cape
MACKENZIE BAY
Arctic Circle
Yukon R.
L A S K A
Kuskokvim Mts
Alaskan Mts
Mt Wrangell
Mt S. Elias
Cook River
Prince William Sound
Yukutat or Bering B.
Chilkat
Chilkoot Pass
White Pass
Lynn Canal
Stephens Channel
CHICAGOF I.
ADMIRALTY I.
Sitka
New Archangel
DIXON ENTRANCE OR GRANITSA CHANNEL
Fort McPherson
Mackenzie R.
Fort Good Hope
Fort Simpson
Fort Selkirk
Dawson
Klondike R.
Stewart R.
Pelly R.
Pelly Mts
Porcupine R.
Peel R.
Rocky Mts
Frances L.
Dease L.
Teslin L.
Hudson Bay
Franklin Range
Richardson Mts
Romanzof Mts
Brooks Range
Endicott Mts
Koyukuk R.
Yukon R.
Tanana R.
Kuskokwim R.
Nushagak R.
Bristol Bay
Kodiak I.
Unalaska I.
Aleutian Is.
Behring Sea
Behring Strait
Kotzebue Sound
Norton Sound
St Michaels
Nulato
Anvik
Andreafski
Kaltag
Koserefski
Nulukhtahyet
Tanaiakh R.
Tuluk
Fairbanks
Circle City
Forty Mile
Rampart City
Eagle City
Belle Isle
Ogotoruk Creek
Kowak R.
Noatak R.
Colville R.
Meade River Mountains
Inland R.
Franklin Pt.
Point Belcher
Escholtz B.
Kotzebue Inlet
Hope
Wainwright Inlet
Harrison B.
Smith B.
Petty Mts
Camden B.
Demarcation Pt.
Herschel I.
Baillie I.
Kittigazuit
Mackenzie Mts
Liard R.
Francis R.
Lewes R.
Yukon Flats
Ogilvie Mts
Selwyn Mts
Mackenzie Mts
Nahanni Mts
Nahanni Lakes
Gatherall Rocks
Mt Vancouver
Mt Fairweather
Mt Crillon
Glacier Bay
Cross Sound
Chatham Str.
Frederick Sd.
Christian's Bay
Port Conclusion
Port Althorp
Port Banks
Port Chatham
Port Elizabeth
Port Etches
Port Valdez
Port Mulgrave
Port Clarence
Cape Prince of Wales
Cape Lisburne
Cape Beaufort
Cape Halkett
Cape Simpson
Cape Lisburne
Cape Thompson
Cape Krusenstern
Cape Espenberg
Cape Darby
Cape Nome
Cape Romanzof
Cape Newenham
Cape Douglas
Cape Elizabeth
Cape Fairweather
Cape Spencer
Cape Ommaney
Cape Addington
Cape Muzon
Cape Chacon
Cape Decision
Cape Edward
Cape Forrester
Cape Muratof
Cape Bucarelli
Cape Ulitka
Cape Omgomoi


Akountan
Akoun
Akoutan Pass
Makouchinskay B.
Moorovskay B.
Spirkin I.
Abatourok
Tigaldan
Ougamok
Ougamok Pass
C. Lutke
Sanak or Hakluit
Chernabour Rocks
TO SAN FRANCISCO
165°
Longitude West of Greenwich

THROUGH THE
GOLD-FIELDS OF ALASKA
TO BERING STRAITS

CHAPTER I

JUNEAU — DYEA

Southern Alaska is the Norway of America. Juneau, to-day, is thronged with gaily dressed tourists disgorged by the steamer that has brought us from Victoria: a two days' journey through fjords of indescribable beauty, past towering peaks of granite, densely wooded valleys, and glaciers of clear blue crystal washed by the waves of the sea. It is the tenth day of June, but although the sky is cloudless, and the little town bathed in sunshine, snow still lies deep on the hill-sides, and a keen breeze blows down from an amphitheatre of snowy mountains a short distance inland. Here, in the hotel

veranda, all is bustle and commotion. Parties are being organised to explore the town, an operation which the steep tortuous alleys and miry streets render somewhat difficult. The local photographer is driving a brisk trade, while a number of filthy Indians, in gaudy rags, are disposing of 'curios' at prices that would startle Port Said or Colombo. For time is short. In three or four hours, at most, the 'Queen' will have weighed anchor; and her visits are few and far between. The tourists will return to civilisation vaguely satisfied that they have 'done Alaska,' and probably unmindful of the fact that *their* Alaska bears about as much relation to the entire country as the county of Kent to the rest of England.

I left New York for Paris, by land (accompanied by my servant, George Harding, an old fellow-traveller), on May 26, 1896. Our proposed route lay from New York to Juneau via Victoria, B.C.; from Juneau across the Chilkoot Pass to a chain of lakes at the head of the Great Yukon river, and down the Yukon to Fort St. Michael, on Bering Sea. The crossing of Bering Straits

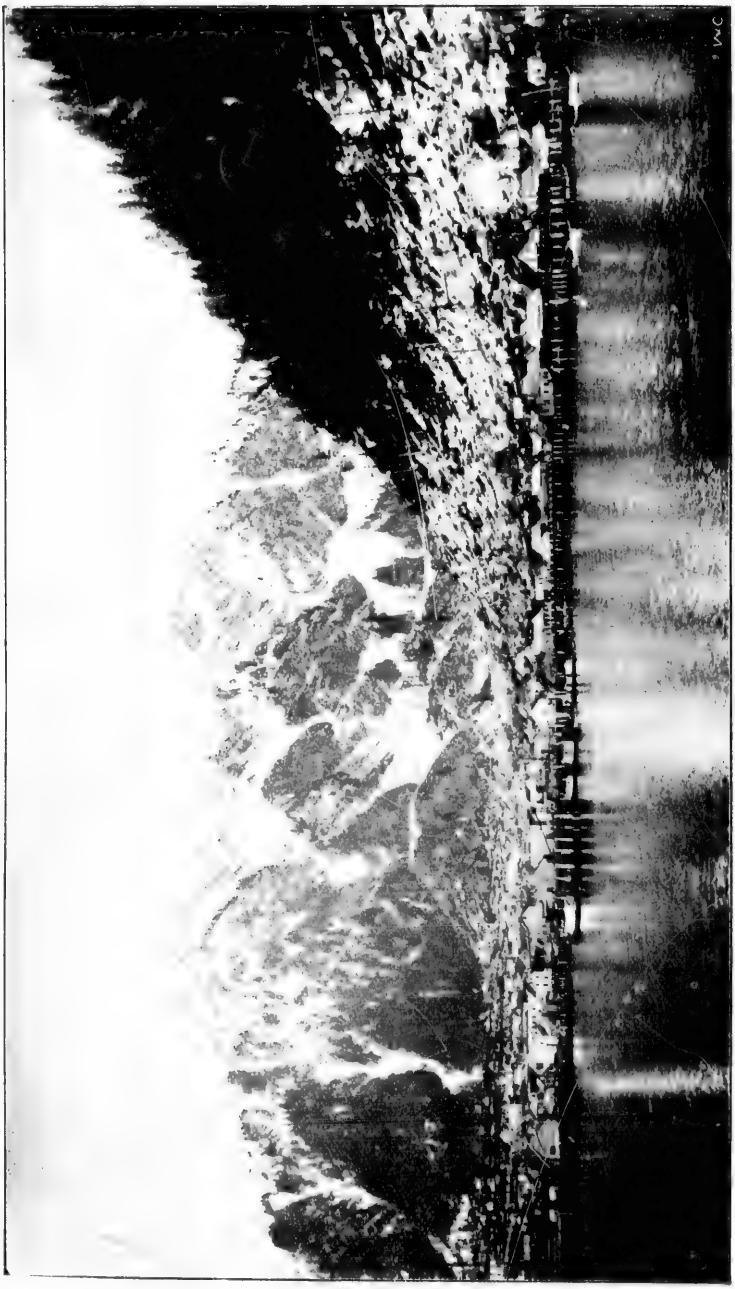
was, if possible, to be accomplished over the ice. Should this prove impracticable, the American revenue cutter 'Bear' was placed at my disposal by the authorities at Washington to convey us from Fort St. Michael to the Asiatic coast. In Siberia our objective point was the remote settlement of Anadyrsk, where there is bi-yearly communication with St. Petersburg, about 6,000 miles distant. From Anadyrsk we hoped to gain the city of Irkoutsk (via Okhotsk and Yakoutsk), and proceed thence to Europe by road and railway.

This journey was not undertaken on the spur of the moment. I was over a year making my preparations. The Great Sahára itself is not more sterile than the Arctic deserts we were to cross. Everything had to be thought of —provisions, arms and ammunition; especially the first named, for Alaska produces absolutely nothing in the way of food. A guide, too, was essential. We were, therefore, fortunate in securing the services of one Joe Cooper, an old-timer, who was returning to the Yukon gold-fields, and who agreed (for a consideration)

to pilot us over the dreaded Chilkoot Pass, and down the lakes and rapids to Forty-Mile City.

A few finishing touches to our outfit necessitated a two days' delay at Juneau, a picturesque little town of Alpine appearance. Juneau contains perhaps 3,000 inhabitants, and was founded in 1881. This so-called 'city' consists of wooden houses laid out with regularity, but the streets are generally knee-deep in mud during the summer on account of the incessant rainfall. It is a busy place, with two hotels, good shops, innumerable drinking saloons, and electric light everywhere. Miners fit out here for the Yukon region, and it may be well to advise the inexperienced contemplating a visit to Klondike to do likewise; for there are storekeepers here who thoroughly understand the business, and who do nothing else.[1] On Douglas Island near here is the famous Treadwell Mine, where the largest quartz mill in the world crushes 600 tons in the twenty-four hours. This mine has already yielded more gold than was paid for the whole of Alaska!

[1] For outfit for Alaska see Appendix A.



JUNEAU, ALASKA—LOOKING NORTH

The population of Juneau appeared to consist mainly of store- and saloon-keepers, miners on their way to the Yukon, and a few flashily dressed ladies of doubtful reputation. Many of the latter were attired in 'bloomers,' a garb that rendered them, if possible, more unattractive than nature had already done. Labour should be cheap in Juneau, for the streets are generally crowded with loafers from the Pacific slope, who land here almost penniless, with the vague intention of working their way to the gold-fields. Oddly enough, with such a riff-raff population, crime is rare. The majority of the gold-seekers are steady industrious men with sufficient capital to make a good start, and evil-doers are summarily dealt with. Notwithstanding its immunity from rowdiness, the place has much in common with the old Californian mining camps, and there are plenty of sharks of both sexes to waylay and fleece the lucky digger on his way back to the Golden Gates. Sounds of revelry are heard on every side throughout the brief summer night, for

Juneau is a blaze of electric light from dusk till dawn, and never seems to sleep.

Joe Cooper arrived on the second day of our stay, and preparations were made for a start the same evening for Dyea, at the head of Lynn Canal—the end of salt-water navigation. The distance from Juneau to this point is about 100 miles, and could in a well-found vessel be accomplished with comfort in very few hours; but I would not willingly cross the Serpentine in the crazy little craft upon which we embarked that night. The 'Rustler' was a revelation (even for Alaska) in dirt and discomfort. She measured perhaps forty-five feet in length and was covered from stem to stern by a kind of wooden shed entered by a doorway, which, when closed, entirely excluded light and air. The space below the filthy deck was reserved for baggage, so that the rickety plank structure afore-mentioned formed the sole accommodation. As it also contained the boiler and engines, the heat, stench, and noise may be better imagined than described. There was only one bunk, in a tiny wheelhouse forward,

for the use of the Captain. The 'Rustler,' licensed to carry twenty-five persons, contained on this occasion sixty-seven, most of whom were intoxicated, which did not improve matters. Anticipations of a pleasant voyage completely vanished when, upon leaving harbour, a number of passengers (stationed on the roof) crossed to the port side to wave a last farewell, and the little tub heeled over till water came pouring in over the low gunwale. The night was fine and still, however, which compensated for loss of sleep. By midnight men overcome by drink had fallen in all directions, and the place looked like a Texan saloon after a free fight. One could not step across the filthy den for human faces or turn without touching some prostrate form. Towards morning a breeze crept up from the southward and raised a ripple that necessitated the closing of the door. The heat and stench occasioned by the engines now becoming unbearable, I struggled forward to the wheelhouse, where Captain Donald Campbell courteously offered me half his camp stool, and I managed to get a mouthful of fresh air.

The morning was bright and pleasant, but a rapidly freshening wind somewhat detracted from my enjoyment of the glorious scenery. Lynn Canal is the grandest fjord on the coast, and its western shores present a magnificent panorama of snow-clad mountains fringed by dark pine forest to the water's edge. Towards midday the Davidson Glacier was passed, and near enough to distinguish the strange and beautiful effects produced upon it by cloud and sunshine. The Davidson Glacier is fan-shaped and second only in size and grandeur to the Muir Glacier, which lies to the west of it. Both are visited by hundreds of tourists every summer, which perhaps accounts for the existence of the now famous 'Silent City.' The latter is simply a 'mirage' over the Muir Glacier, but a mirage so perfect that the discoverer (an enterprising American) returned to Juneau with a marvellous story. The city he had seen contained not only great public buildings, lofty spires, and well-defined streets, and parks, but even *people walking about*! This occurred about four years ago; but, although

thousands have since visited the spot, the mysterious vision has obstinately refused to reappear. The 'discovery' of the city had some good results, for it swelled the receipts of the Tourist Steamship Company, while the 'discoverer' made hundreds of dollars by the sale of a photograph he had been fortunate enough to obtain of the phenomenon. A sceptical English tourist has since also made the 'discovery' that his own house figures in the picture, which (he says) is simply a poor negative of his native city: Bristol, in England. But Englishmen are proverbially incredulous!

No food of any kind being provided for passengers on board the 'Rustler,' I gladly accepted Captain Campbell's invitation to share his mid-day meal, which was brought up by a grimy youth of uncertain age. 'Hootchinoo' and 'Alaskan strawberries,' said the skipper jocosely, as we fell to, and I learnt, for the first time, the local vernacular for whisky and beans. During this repast the grimy youth (who constituted the entire crew) took the helm. There was a light-hearted abandon about

Donald Campbell's navigation that was anything but reassuring, especially as parts of the Lynn Canal are notoriously dangerous. But this caused my friend little anxiety, and the boat was frequently left in my charge while he went aft to visit his friends and refresh himself. I learnt at Dyea that seamanship was a comparatively recent phase in his career, and that he had formerly driven a milk-cart in San Francisco.

Towards 6 P.M. we entered Dyea Inlet, but the wind had gradually increased since morning and it was now blowing half a gale. We could luckily run before it, but great white rollers more than once threatened to poop the wretched little cockboat as she floundered helplessly about at the mercy of the waves. A dull lowering sky and rapidly falling barometer presaged a dirtier night, and even Donald Campbell looked uneasy. The ex-milkman finally resolved to run for Skagway Bay, where there is good anchorage, and proceed, if possible, to Dyea (which is merely an open roadstead) in the morning. It seemed, more than once, as though

we should never reach Skagway, or indeed, anywhere else, for the launch was leaking badly. Eight o'clock, however, found us at anchor in fairly smooth water, and though our cable consisted of a flimsy rope, and a rocky lee-shore would have made short work of the 'Rustler,' I slept soundly enough that night, undisturbed by the revels of our fellow-passengers, who were evidently bent on making another night of it. When I awoke the sun was shining brightly, the wind had fallen, and we had reached our destination.

Although there are at the present time several routes into Alaska under the consideration of the Canadian and United States Governments, there were in 1894 but two recognised means of reaching the Yukon Valley. One (which is still largely used) is by sea from San Francisco to Fort St. Michael, on Bering Sea, a distance of about 2,500 miles, which takes from eighteen to thirty days (according to weather) to accomplish. At St. Michael passengers and freight are transshipped to flat-bottomed steamers, which carry them about 1,800 miles more up the Yukon river (past Circle City, in U. S. territory) to

Forty-Mile City, in British territory. Klondike is situated only a short distance above this point. This route is only practicable from the end of June to the middle of September, as the Yukon is at other times blocked by ice, while St. Michael is, for the same reason, unapproachable by sea.

The other route, via Dyea and the Chilkoot, is, as the reader will see, considerably shorter, though much less easily accomplished.[1] Other routes into the country which have attracted attention since the gold-rush are the 'White Pass,' the 'Taku Pass,' 'Jack Daulton's Trail,' and the 'Stickine route.' Recent events have not confirmed the favourable opinion I once formed of the first-named pass, which seems to be only second to the Chilkoot in impracticability. There can be little doubt, however, that Daulton's Trail has much to recommend it, especially as over 800 head of cattle have been driven across it this year (1897) without the

[1] Sea route via St. Michael . . 4,350 Eng. miles
Land „ via Dyea . . . 1,650 „
Fare from San Francisco to Forty-Mile City by sea route, $175.

slightest difficulty. But it would be premature to come to any conclusion until the spring of 1898, when the surveyors now at work on the coast will have sent in their reports, and a practicable road into Alaska will no doubt have been discovered.[1]

A foretaste of the pleasures of Alaskan travel awaits us at Dyea, where we are compelled, owing to the shelving beach, to wade ashore for over half a mile. The crowd splashing to land from the 'Rustler' looks like an invading army. The water is scarcely knee-deep, but an occasional hole lets one in over the waist, which adds to the general hilarity of the proceedings, but does not improve the temper or the provisions we carry. Alaska is no place for the fastidious. If you want a thing done, you must do it yourself, or 'get left!'

The name of Dyea is derived from an Indian word signifying 'a carrying place.' The village is picturesquely situated in a valley surrounded by thickly wooded hills. One might be in Switzerland. Horses and cattle graze on the

[1] See Appendix C.

lowlands, while, far away on the horizon, a succession of snowy peaks glitter against a cloudless blue sky. The settlement consists of a large wooden storehouse, and perhaps half a dozen log huts inhabited by Indians. These are generally surrounded by the white tents of diggers bound inland, or 'getting out' of the country. A Yukon miner never talks of 'leaving' Alaska. He 'gets out' of this Arctic ice-trap, which has already entombed so many of those who have ventured within its treacherous gates.

A delay of two or three days is generally unavoidable here, while Indians are procured to carry tents and baggage over the Chilkoot Pass to the lakes, twenty-four miles distant. Leaving Joe and Harding to pitch the tent, I strolled over to the store, where the proprietor, a brawny Scotchman, in gum-boots and shirt sleeves, was sunning himself at his doorway. Mr. Heron was inclined to be taciturn, and as he has (or had) the monopoly of Indians, horses, and everything else one happened to want, considerable tact was necessary to bring him into a more genial frame of mind. This took

A FUR STORE ALASKA

some time; for Heron at Dyea is monarch of all he surveys. In justice, let me add that success was attained more by the fact that we were fellow-countrymen than by the aid of the almighty dollar. Also, my big friend's bark was worse than his bite. Indian packers and horses were promised for the morrow, and at mid-day my party were doing justice to an excellent meat pie and vegetables in the storekeeper's back parlour. This may seem an unnecessary detail. I mention it, as this happened to be the one decent meal we got between Juneau and Forty-Mile City, a distance of nearly 700 miles!

Towards evening I walked out with a gun, but saw nothing, with the exception of a couple of large eagles and some sea-gulls. There is very little sport to be had down the Yukon. Moose used to be plentiful, but the continual crack of the miner's rifle has scared them away from the riverside, and one must now go far inland to find them. At Fort St. Michael, on Bering Sea, I got plenty of duck and ptarmigan; but, for all we saw elsewhere, both rifle and fowling-piece might, with advantage, have been left at home.

I returned to camp to find all made snug for the night. Joe Cooper and Harding had lost no time, for many of our 'Rustler' friends had not even commenced to encamp or to sort the confused mass of flour-bags, Yukon stoves and mining implements that had been thrown down anyhow, and that, even now, were still being dragged wearily ashore from the steamer. Many of the parties had brought huge American banners that floated proudly where tents should have been, but the only visible symbol of far-away England was the tiny Union Jack that fluttered over our heads. I don't think I met half a dozen Englishmen between Dyea and the shores of Bering Sea.

The chief topic of conversation in camp that night was the condition of the Chilkoot Pass. No mother ever watched a sick child with greater care and anxiety than do the Indians the now famous peak that rears its ugly head midway between Dyea and the lakes. Every change of temperature, wind, or weather is carefully noted; for even during the summer months snow flurries are frequent, and the summit is frequently veiled

INDIAN TOTEM POLES

in dense mist for days together. But the Indians who crowded our camp to-night prophesied good weather, at any rate for the morrow, although the actual ascent would not be made until the following day.

The Alaskan Indian is not prepossessing, judging from the specimens we met with at Dyea. Natives are very rarely seen in the interior, and from Lake Lindemann to the village of Thron-Diuck (Klondike) we came across less than a score. There are many tribes, however, ranging from the Thlinkits of the coast range to the Eskimo on the shores of the Arctic Ocean. The Thlinkits, who number about 7,000, are a fine muscular race, but the laziest and most impudent scoundrels I have ever met with. Lying and theft may be said to be their chief characteristics. Their once picturesque dress is now discarded for tweeds and trousers which render them even more unattractive than formerly. The Thlinkit women are under-sized, and, for the most part, repulsive, their appearance not being improved by a black, oily preparation which is smeared thickly over the face as a protection

against mosquito bites. Only tiny children are exempt from 'packing' outfits over the Chilkoot. The women, and even the dogs, must do their share of the work. Some of the latter have been known to carry as much as twenty pounds to the lakes in canvas bags, slung, pannier-fashion, over their backs.

There is no actual night in these regions at this season of the year, but the hewing of timber and hammering of tent pegs around kept us out of the blankets until twilight was merging into day, and it was almost time to light a fire for our morning meal.

CHAPTER II

SHEEP CAMP—THE CHILKOOT PASS

THE name 'Alaska' is a corruption of 'Al-ay-eksa,' a native name signifying 'A Great Country.' It is only natural that a region so wild and so remote should be comparatively unknown in England, but there are probably many Americans ignorant of the vast extent of their newly acquired territory, some even who are unaware that San Francisco is several hundred miles east of the eastern and western extremities of the United States.

Alaska proper (which until 1867 was known as Russian America) has an area of about 600,000 square miles. The population consisted in 1895 of about 8,000 whites and 23,000 Indians in all. Since the gold-rush, however, the former have more than doubled their number.

Alaska may be divided into two great divisions

or districts: South-East and Western Alaska. Mount St. Elias,[1] 18,000 feet high, marks the dividing line at 141 degrees West longitude, running north from this point to the Arctic Ocean. The diversity of climatic and other conditions existing throughout this huge territory, from its southern coasts to the shores of the Polar Sea, is naturally very great. On the North Pacific coast, fjords with densely wooded islands are so numerous that from Victoria in British Columbia to Dyea there are but a few miles of open sea. Inland, almost as far as the Arctic Circle, mountain ranges (many of great altitude) are everywhere visible. There are also many large lakes, often surrounded by the swamps and impenetrable forest that render Alaska so hard a nut for the explorer to crack. Only a few miles north of the coast range, fertile soil and luxuriant vegetation are replaced by the barrenness of an Arctic Sahara, so far as agriculture is concerned. Here, for eight months of the year, vast plains and huge rivers are merged into one vast un-

[1] The ascent of this mountain was recently made, for the first time, by H.H. the Duke of Abruzzi.

trodden world of ice, which few dare to penetrate until the return of spring, or during the brief summer when roses bloom, and the coarse luxuriant grass is plentifully sprinkled with daisies and other wild flowers. In Central Alaska the ground is perpetually frozen a few inches below the surface, while in the north, wells have been sunk through forty feet of solid ice.

For those who take care of themselves Alaska is fairly healthy, notwithstanding that the thermometer ranges from 98° Fahr. in the shade to 70° and even 80° below zero. May, June, and July are the best months for the interior, for the days are generally bright and pleasant, and the heat tempered by cool breezes. On the coast rain and fog prevail. Occasionally, in June and July, the sun is visible for a few hours, but there are on an average only sixty-six fine days throughout the year. In 1884 a rainfall of 155 inches was registered at Ounalaska. The rain seldom pours down, but falls in a kind of steady drizzle from a leaden sky, while the grey sodden landscape presents a picture of utter dreariness and desolation. But this damp cheerlessness has

its advantages. The incessant humidity sheds a perpetual verdure over the coast districts, and the temperature rarely falls to zero. Winter only sets in with severity about the 1st of December, and snow has vanished, except on the mountains and hillsides, by the end of May. The heat in July rarely exceeds 75° Fahr. The soil is rich and root crops are prolific, while horses and cattle do well. Above all, the ports of Juneau, Dyea, and Sitka are open to the world all the year round. Perhaps, taking all these facts into consideration, the coast settlements are preferable, as a permanent residence, to those of the interior.

Alaska was discovered by a Russian expedition led by Bering in 1741, and settlements established along its coasts for the fish and fur trades. A charter granted to a Russo-American Fur Company by the Emperor Paul in 1799 was renewed in 1839, when Sitka became the principal settlement. Gold was then undreamt of, and I imagine that, even ten years ago, few people in England were aware of its existence west of the Caribou district. Alaska was suggestive of

Eskimo skin-boats, wolves and walrus, but certainly not of the precious metal.

Taking Sitka as a starting-point, the Russo-American Company established about twenty smaller stations, and an important trade was carried on in furs and walrus tusks. About 30,000 skins of the seal and sea-otter were exported annually, besides a considerable quantity of ivory. But the privileges of this company expired in 1863, and in 1867 the whole of Russian America was acquired by the United States for the sum of $7,200,000.

Secretary Seward, who was chiefly responsible for the purchase, was blamed at the time for what was looked upon by many as a foolish blunder. No one then imagined that 'Seward's Ice Box' would, in a very few years, repay its purchase price many times over; for, indeed, time alone can reveal the boundless resources of this great country. During the first five years of American possession the new province made a return of eight per cent. on the investment. The gold mines (not including that taken out this year, 1897) have produced $8,000,000, and in six

years the salmon industry yielded $7,500,000. The commerce of Alaska was, in 1867, $2,500,000. It is now ten times as great. In seals, $35,000,000 have been exported in thirty years, and $53,000,000 in furs alone.

The industries so far developed pertain mostly to the coast, but who can tell what riches the opening up of the Yukon Valley may not reveal? Coal, copper, lead, and petroleum are known to exist in large quantities, while the timber supply is not only practically inexhaustible, but of great value.

It is sad to think that the much-maligned statesman who acquired this priceless territory did not live to see his golden dream realised. One of poor Seward's last speeches was prophetic. A few days before his death, the Secretary was asked by a friend what he considered the most important measure of his political career? 'The purchase of Alaska,' was the reply; 'but it will take the people a generation to find it out!'

Glorious weather favoured our departure from Dyea. About 7 A.M. Heron and the Indians

appeared, leading the three sorry-looking screws that were to carry our outfit as far as Sheep Camp, twelve miles distant, beyond which there is no foothold for horses. 'Flap-Jacks'[1] and coffee were discussed while the packs were adjusted, and by nine o'clock all was ready for a start, my party consisting of our three selves and the four Indians who were to accompany us as guides and packers as far as Lake Lindemann.

The first part of the trail after leaving Dyea follows the bed of the Dyea River, which in spring-time is a roaring torrent, but which dwindles down in summer to a narrow stream, partly concealed by huge boulders. There is no path of any kind, and the rough rocky ground made walking so laborious, that frequent halts were necessary, and we travelled barely two miles an hour. The horses slipped and slithered painfully over the smooth worn rocks, and often fell heavily, which entailed further tedious delays, while their burthens were set straight. I did not regret having refused Heron's kind offer of a mount!

[1] The Yukon miner's name for a kind of small pancake, made of flour and water, like the Australian 'Damper.'

Three hours of this work brought us to a spot where the trail turns off abruptly to the right, and where the actual ascent, through a dense forest, commences. The path here was very bad and in many places almost impassable; partly on account of roots and tree stumps, but chiefly because it is laid across a succession of deep morasses which cannot be avoided without making a détour of several miles. In one of these bogs, where the mire was quite waist deep, a horse lost his footing and fell. More than an hour was occupied in extricating him, and indeed it looked at one time as though he would disappear altogether, packs and all. Two swift mountain torrents, several yards across, fed by a large glacier this side of the Chilkoot, were then forded. This was only accomplished with difficulty, for the poor jaded nags were exhausted by their struggles in the swamps, and the swift rush of the icy cold water nearly carried them off their legs. At some seasons of the year these fords constitute a very dangerous feature of this portion of the journey, and several men have been drowned while crossing them. Near one

MINERS ON THE ROAD TO KLONDIKE, CHILKOOT PASS

of these streams we found a party of gold-seekers camped, who were returning to Juneau, having failed (owing to lack of provisions) to reach the lakes.

Towards mid-day the heat became intense, and I drank more than once from the clear brooklets that, fringed with cool green ferns and wild flowers, came rippling down the mountain side. But I paid dearly for my rashness by suffering for many hours after from the raging thirst that snow and glacier water invariably create. Joe Cooper informed me that this is one of the chief discomforts of Alaskan travel, especially in winter. A small pebble kept in the mouth will afford relief, while cold tea is the best thirst-quencher that exists. Water (in Alaska) only increases the evil.

Sheep Camp was reached about 6 P.M., both men and horses being pretty well done up after the trudge over what Joe Cooper described as 'a pretty easy trail.' The place was deserted, though a smouldering camp fire showed that a party had only recently left for the summit. The camp is a circular clearing in the forest,

where trees have been felled for perhaps fifty yards around. We encamped on the banks of a swift shallow stream that bisects the circle. It is a sheltered, picturesque spot, and the bright sunshine, fragrant grass and flowers and brawling brook would have reminded one of a bit of Devonshire scenery, had it not been for a range of rocky precipitous mountains that barred the way a few miles ahead. From here also can be seen the huge Sheep Camp Glacier suspended so insecurely between two granite peaks that it looks as though a child's touch would send it crashing into the valley below. The face of this glacier is about 300 feet high. Loud reports like the distant roar of heavy guns are continually heard issuing from it, and these were at times so deafening that on one occasion we rushed out of the tent expecting to find that the whole mass had fallen from its precarious perch.[1] The ever-changing effects of light and shade that passed over this glacier were indescribably beautiful. In dull weather the surface would

[1] I am informed that a portion of this glacier became detached in the summer of 1897 and flooded Sheep Camp, killing a number of people.

be of a turquoise blue, and its crevasses the colour of a sapphire; on sunny days the entire expanse would be white, bright, and dazzling as a huge diamond; while, during the twilight hours the most delicate shades of pink, mauve, and the tenderest green would sweep like a movable rainbow over the icy wilderness, that seemed so near and yet was unapproachable. One could stand for hours and watch this natural kaleidoscope. And, indeed, there were plenty of opportunities for studying the beauties of nature, for a delay of four days occurred here. Some Indians returning from the summit came into camp about 4 A.M. the day after our arrival. They looked worn out and exhausted, and, after some food, told us that no outfits could be got over for a couple of days at least. The trail beyond Stonehouse (the tree limit) was in a shocking condition, and the snow in many parts waist deep. It was, therefore, decided that Cooper push on alone, if possible, to Lake Lindemann the next morning, and commence building our boat. Harding and I were to follow with the Indians and outfit on

the first favourable opportunity; but as travellers are sometimes detained here for a fortnight, waiting for fair weather, the date of our departure seemed rather uncertain.

It was weary work waiting, for there was absolutely nothing to do. Books do not form part of an Alaskan traveller's kit, for owing to the barren nature of the country, every ounce must be sacrificed to the food supply. On the second day two parties arrived from Dyea and encamped on the other side of the stream. We recognised some of our 'Rustler' friends, who greeted us cordially, and were not in the least surprised to find that we had come to a full stop so early in the journey. Towards evening, a spare elderly man clad in a red jersey, moccasins and a blue cricketing cap walked into my tent. A glance sufficed to show that this motley garb was worn by a gentleman, but I was scarcely prepared to find that the stranger was no less a personage than the Rev. Father Barnum, a Catholic missionary who has lived for many years on the Yukon, and whose name

and good deeds are a byword throughout Alaska.

The poor Father, who was returning from a six months' visit to the States, was in a sorry plight. A certain American Transportation Company (newly formed) had undertaken to convey him to his mission on the Lower Yukon for a considerable sum of money, which was to include packing over the Chilkoot, boat-building, food, and all other expenses. But the company had promised more than they could perform, and this, their first expedition, was now stranded a short distance below Sheep Camp, and likely to remain there. Hearing of my party, the Father had left his companions and pushed ahead on the chance of being able to join us. Otherwise he must, he said, return to San Francisco and proceed by sea to his destination, if indeed it was not already too late. Seeing that we had plenty of provisions and a fairly large tent, I acceded to Father Barnum's request, and he was soon comfortably installed in our camp, with, as he laughingly remarked, at any rate '*some* chance of getting to his journey's

end!' The Father was a truly welcome addition to our trio. No better traveller or more genial companion ever sat over a camp fire, and I was indeed glad before many days elapsed that Fate had sent him our way.

A letter was brought in by one Daniel, an Indian, early on the third morning, from Joe Cooper. Joe had safely reached Lake Lindemann, and had begun to build the boat. He had been overtaken by a heavy snowstorm on the summit, which made the trail on the downward side very bad, and more risky than usual. Joe begged us to send food at once, having finished the bag of biscuits with which he started. Several parties were camped on the lake, boat-building, but provisions were very scarce.

The weather being favourable, I resolved to move on that night with the outfit, and dispatched Daniel in the meantime with a small quantity of flour and some bacon. Hearing of my intention, our Dyea Indians slouched into the tent and obstinately refused to pack one ounce to the lake unless they were paid $12 for every 100 lbs. They had agreed at Dyea to

take $9, but the scoundrels knew, as we did, how helpless we were up here. Our 'Rustler' friends had foolishly promised to pay $11, so there was nothing for it but to do likewise. Besides, another day's delay might have meant another week's bad weather.

The passage of the Chilkoot is generally made by night, as the soft deep snow is then in firmer condition. The outfit was despatched at 3 P.M. to await us at Stonehouse, about 2,000 feet below the summit, where a halt is made to gather strength for the real struggle. I must admit that when I saw the crushing weights carried by the Indians, and the perilous trail over which they were borne, I ceased to wonder that the Dyea men had struck for higher wages. A Thlinkit Indian will pack 120 lbs. with ease up places where an unencumbered white man would be toiling on his hands and knees. One of the Chilkat tribe has even packed a piano-organ weighing 220 lbs. over to the lakes, alone and unassisted. And yet these natives subsist almost entirely on dried fish. They are terrible drunkards, but as a severe

penalty awaits those found selling them whisky, they can seldom indulge in their favourite vice.

By 10 P.M. all is ready for a start. We have no mountaineering paraphernalia, and are armed simply with three stout wooden staffs cut that afternoon, but these are discarded long before the summit is reached. Passing the silent white tents of our sleeping companions, we enter a dark and narrow defile that becomes steeper and steeper as the Pass is approached. The trail is rough and stony and intersected by numberless streams, while tree stumps, gnarled roots, and tangled brushwood occasionally bring us down headlong. Presently the forest becomes less dense and patches of snow appear on either hand. An hour later we take our first rest, drenched with perspiration, at Stonehouse, a rocky ledge overhanging the first of seven or eight snowy 'plateaus' that must be crossed to reach the foot of the actual peak, which is itself nearly 1,000 feet high. The Chilkoot cannot really be called 'a Pass.' It would be considered a dangerous mountain in Switzerland, and a question of guides, ropes, and ice-axes.

A DOG-TEAM AT STONEHOUSE, CHILKOOT PASS, ALASKA

Stonehouse is the limit of trees. A huge granite rock, shaped something like a human dwelling, suggested the name. We found our Indians huddled up under this, sheltered from an icy wind that whistled through my fur jacket as though it were muslin. After a brief halt we pushed on, descending a steep ridge until we stood on the first ice-plateau. The travelling here was much easier and we went cautiously ahead in Indian file, two 'Siwashes'[1] in front, two in the rear, and ourselves in the centre. And yet this portion of the ascent is, perhaps, the most perilous. This 'plateau,' like all the others, was broken away beneath by numerous watercourses, and was simply a kind of crust, suspended 15 to 20 feet above the ground. Had there been fir-trees below we should have been standing on the upper branches! There was absolutely no path or trail to guide one, and huge crevasses where the snow had fallen in upon some foaming torrent appeared at frequent intervals. We progressed but slowly, for our guides probed the snow carefully at every step.

[1] The Alaskan term for Indians.

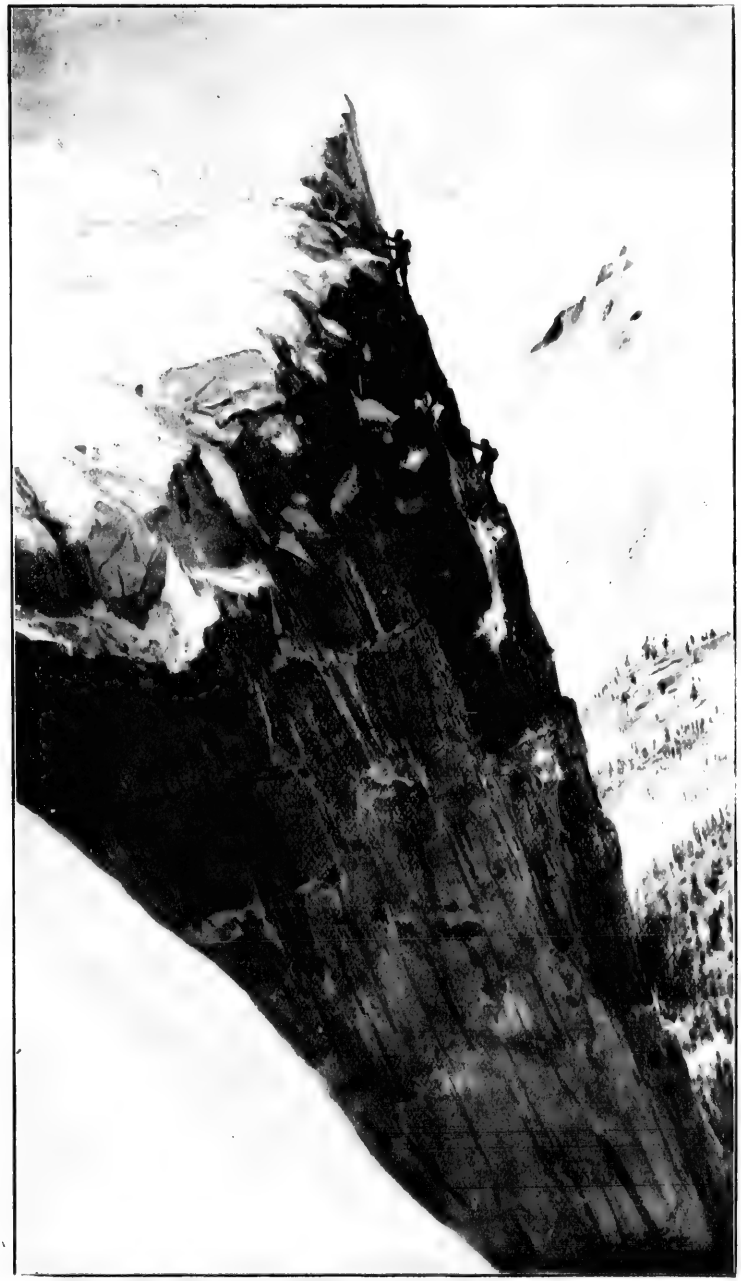
They knew that a break through would mean certain death. These plateaus increased in steepness until, midway up the last, we had thrown away our sticks and were scrambling painfully on hands and knees. It was necessary to scratch holes in the snow with our fingers to gain any ground. The Indians, with their heavy packs, used short knives for this purpose, but stopped every few moments to regain their breath, for which I was not sorry. It was impossible to rest for more than a few moments, for to let go would have meant a fall of perhaps a couple of hundred feet to the foot of the slope. The Bishop of Alaska has described this portion of the ascent as 'hair-raising' work, and he does not exaggerate. To make matters worse, a thin drizzling rain now fell, which chilled us to the bone and made the going even worse than before. These plateaus appeared to be oval in shape. Each terminates in a kind of narrow antechamber formed by enormous boulders. These gloomy portals, which were passed with some difficulty, recalled Doré's pictures of the 'Inferno,' and the outlook, when we emerged from

them on to another almost perpendicular wall of ice, was not a cheerful one. The scene was one of utter desolation. Here and there, below us, masses of black rock dotted the white expanse, like islands on a sea of snow; while overhead towered the grim spectral peak of the Chilkoot, rendered still more vague and terrible by a rapidly rising mist. This presently grew so dense that further progress became impossible. Scaling the rocky ridge that encloses the last 'plateau,' we descended into a kind of cavern, which, though open to the rain, afforded some protection from the cutting blast. Here we managed to light a smoky, spluttering fire, over which we shivered until the grey dawn partly dispelled the fog and enabled us to resume our journey.

We soon reached the actual base of the Chilkoot, and here hard work commenced in grim earnest up the granite face of the mountain. The distance from our camping ground to the summit is barely 1,000 feet, but the ascent occupied nearly two hours. There is of course no path, nor would it be possible to make one; for the rocks are loose and insecure and

the passage of a man will often send a boulder crashing down, to the deadly peril of those below. In some places it was necessary to squeeze round the wall of the precipice on narrow ledges of rock that trembled under foot and threatened to dislodge and send one whirling through space into eternity. The last 300 feet was like scaling the walls of a house. With ropes and proper appliances, the passage of this mountain could be made far easier; but it was, under the circumstances, such exhausting, heart-breaking work that I more than once had serious thoughts of turning back. Finally, however, at about 4 A.M., we stood on the summit, breathless, bleeding, and ragged, but safe. My aneroid gave the altitude at 3,620 feet above sea level.

Lake Lindemann is now about nine miles distant. The downward trail from the summit is comparatively easy. We accomplish it by simply sitting down on the snow and coasting down the steep declivity for about 500 feet, at a furious rate, to Crater Lake, one of the sources of the Yukon River. Crater Lake retains ice



THE GATEWAY OF ALASKA—NEARING THE SUMMIT OF THE CHILKOOT

throughout the year, but the summer sunshine has covered it with a layer of slush knee-deep that considerably retards our progress. A blinding snow-storm now adds to our discomfort, but we trudge steadily on, with numbed limbs and tingling faces, and are presently rewarded by the sight of a strip of blue sky: the herald of fairer weather ahead. Some deep snow-drifts are crossed before we reach timber-line. I notice here a peculiar phenomenon: our foot-prints leaving a luminous, greenish impression as bright as electric light, which only fades after two or three seconds. I believe that the same effect has been noticed by explorers in North-eastern Siberia during certain seasons of the year. The trail becomes worse as we near the plain, and we now splash through mud and snowy slush, occasionally waist-deep, with intervals of icy cold water to wade through. Towards 9 A.M. a halt is made for breakfast, consisting of some biscuits, a cake of chocolate,[1]

[1] I have found the 'Kola Chocolate' made by Christy, of Lime Street, E.C., invaluable on these occasions.

and a nip of whisky apiece. We are dripping with rain and perspiration, aching in every limb, and ready to drop with fatigue; but another four miles lies between us and our destination: four miles of mud and morass (for ice and snow have disappeared), also a broad swift stream, where Harding is nearly swept away by the force of the current, and across which Father Barnum is borne, like some patriarch of old, by an Indian. Another steep ascent of about 800 feet brings us to the summit of a range of hills covered with dense brushwood. Here the fog lifts and at last reveals the blue waters of Lake Lindemann sparkling in the sunshine at our feet. A tiny cluster of white tents is visible on the shores of the lake, and we can now dispense with our guides, who have already dropped far behind, weighed down by the heavy packs. At midday we reach camp (after a walk of nearly fourteen consecutive hours), so exhausted that one foot will scarcely follow the other, and are made welcome in a friendly tent until our own comes up. I have roughed it in most parts of

the world—among others, Borneo, Siberia, and Chinese Tartary—but I can safely describe that climb over the Chilkoot as the severest physical experience of my life.

CHAPTER III

THE LAKES

Lake Lindemann to Lake Marsh

ALASKA is one of the few countries in the world where, so far as travelling facilities are concerned, money goes for nothing. Here all grades are equal, from the Government official to the San Francisco 'tough.' At Lake Lindemann, for instance, a boat must be built. There is no hired labour procurable. Every man, be he millionaire or miner, must turn to, and not only fell the timber for its construction, but also saw it into planks—a by no means easy or agreeable operation if the novice is afflicted with weak eyes and gets the lower berth in a sawpit. There is no attempt at shape or symmetry, or, in many cases, even safety. Our own skiff, which was rapidly approaching completion, and which Cooper displayed with pardonable pride, gave me the

impression of being as crank as a Thames canoe, an impression which her launch verified. Joe contended that, being unaware of the addition to our party, he had built his boat for three men, and not for four; and poor Father Barnum was the innocent and unconscious cause of many heated arguments, which, as the Father barely weighed ten stone, were—on Cooper's side—scarcely tenable. At any rate, our craft compared favourably with some of those launched by the miners, who frequently set out from the lakes only to find a watery grave in the rapids below.

Some steaming hot coffee and 'flap-jacks' were at once produced by the Good Samaritan who gave us shelter: one Mr. Ash, a dramatic agent travelling to Circle City with the nucleus of a theatrical company, consisting of a massive golden-haired lady of pleasing presence in bloomer costume. The other artists were on their way to the same place *via* St. Michael's. Mr. and Mrs. Ash had been here for some time, their numerous belongings having entailed the construction of a 'scow,' a kind of barge capable of carrying from ten to fifteen tons. A large and

carefully packed roulette board suggested that Mr. Ash's energies were not to be wholly confined to the production of plays on arrival at his destination.

The outfit did not arrive for several hours, and we sat smoking and chatting with our amusing hostess the greater part of the day, occasionally strolling down to the beach to see how the boat was progressing. She was so nearly completed that there was no work for us to do. Quite thirty people were encamped here, nearly all miners bound for the gold-fields. Every species of boat was in course of construction, the less skilful travellers contenting themselves with rudely built, rickety rafts.[1] The day was cloudless, and the sun so powerful that when the Indians came up our saturated clothes had dried on us. We felt no ill effects, oddly enough, but woke the next morning as fresh as larks. At 11 A.M. we resumed our journey.

Lake Lindemann is the smallest of a series of five lakes that must be crossed before the upper waters of the Yukon River are reached.

[1] The timber used is spruce or pine.

This lake is about six miles long, with an average width of one mile. Its shores consist of low granite cliffs but sparsely wooded in places, on account of the quantity of timber that has been felled by travellers for boat-building. The lower end of the lake terminates in a bad river passage (about three-quarters of a mile long, with a fall of twenty-two feet), which would be called a rapid in any other country. This entails a 'portage' or carrying of the outfit overland, from the foot of one lake to the head of the next. The boat thus lightened is then either 'run through' by one or two men, or drifted down with a rope into smooth water. Lake Lindemann was now quite clear of ice, but it is generally frozen from November until May.

It is fortunate that a still clear day favoured the trial trip of our skiff down Lake Lindemann, for otherwise I doubt (being a poor swimmer) whether these pages would ever have seen the light. Our boat displayed (when packed with men and baggage) a freeboard of exactly two inches, and the slightest movement brought the water rippling over the gunwale. Joe had

thoughtfully provided her with a sail; but as a sudden puff of wind would have meant a certain upset, we refrained from using it. It was scarcely possible to use a paddle, much less an oar, without capsizing. Our departure was watched with interest from the bank, where odds were freely laid on our not getting a hundred yards. It was ticklish work, but Father Barnum displayed his usual coolness under the trying circumstances. 'I can't swim,' said the Father, smiling complacently, and taking his seat with mathematical precision on the centre of a pile of baggage, 'but we certainly can't walk!'

But although progression was naturally slow, the foot of the lake was safely reached in under three hours, and I have seldom felt more relieved to find myself on terra firma. Having landed our outfit, the Father, Harding, and I proceeded to portage it to the second lake, while Joe ran the boat through—an operation that, even to Joe's surprise, was safely accomplished. Portages are one of the many curses of Alaskan travel. It is hard work for a 'tender-foot' to trail through sand and struggle through brushwood

with a blazing sun overhead and 60 or 70 lbs. to carry. The portage was over a mile in length, and as the quantity of baggage entailed three journeys, we camped for the night near a saw-mill at the head of Lake Bennett. The men in charge of the mill were willing to sell their boat—a stoutly built, shapely little craft—for $60, and I gladly closed the bargain. Our new purchase was christened 'Marjorie,' Cooper's discarded *chef-d'œuvre* receiving the not inappropriate name of the 'Slug.' The outfit was stowed in the latter, which enabled us to travel the 600 odd miles to Forty-Mile City in comparative comfort—and safety.

We are now approaching British territory, the boundary line crossing a few miles below the head of Lake Bennett, which is about twenty-six miles long by five or six miles broad, and is famous for its violent storms. Our first day's experience verified this fact. The lake is surrounded by steep rugged cliffs, and its rocky shores render it very difficult, in bad weather, to run for shelter or effect a landing. The suddenness with which gales

spring up here is truly remarkable. Bennett may be as calm and placid as a looking-glass one moment, and in less than half an hour a mountainous sea may be running. This was not quite so in our case, for when we started it was blowing a stiff breeze and the saw-mill people warned us that it would probably turn into a gale before long. The wind was favourable, however, so we hoisted the little 'Marjorie's' huge square sail and were presently flying through the water, the 'Slug' towing astern with Harding at the tiller. Had the wind kept steady, we must have run the length of the lake in three or four hours, but it came in squalls, which increased in violence, while a grey lurid sky, flecked with ragged, flying clouds, looked anything but reassuring. There was soon a heavy sea on, but the 'Marjorie' rode the billows like a duck, although the heavy, lumbering 'Slug' kept pulling her under water, so much so that it became necessary at last to cut the latter adrift. At the same moment a furious gust tore the sheet out of my hand, and our boat, losing headway, shipped a tremendous sea that set all hands

baling for dear life. There was now nothing for it but to run for a sandy spit about two miles distant, and about nine miles from our starting point. We made this welcome haven after a hard pull of nearly two hours, for a sail would have been torn to ribbons. Harding did not get in till we had camped for the night, having been blown away nearly to the opposite shore, and having twice narrowly escaped shipwreck.

We hauled the boats up on the tiny beach, for it was useless to think of setting out again until the gale abated, which appeared unlikely for at least twenty-four hours. The sandy spit upon which we landed was already occupied by another traveller driven to it, like ourselves, by the gale. This was a queer-looking little fellow, an Austrian, with tangled flaxen hair and wild-looking blue eyes. He seemed pleased to see us, and no wonder, stranded in this lonely, desolate spot with very little food and no tent. 'Dutchy' (as Cooper called him) was travelling alone, and in such a crank little tub that we marvelled how he had managed to get even thus far on his journey, for his boat was like a 'coracle,' almost circular.

That night, while my companions slept, we had a long chat over the stove and a glass of grog, while the tempest raged outside and threatened at times to carry away the tent. My friend was a native of Wagram, and had served through the Herzegovinian campaign. He had, on the expiration of his service, emigrated to the States, and, like many others, had drifted on to Alaska, allured by the tempting offers of shipping companies on the Pacific coast. 'Dutchy' informed me that five men had already been drowned on Lake Bennett this year, and that two of his acquaintances, who had crossed the Chilkoot in January to get a good start of their companions, had perished near here of starvation. Their bodies were found by the first party in the ensuing spring. The poor fellows had eaten their sleigh-dogs, and even part of their gum boots as a last resource.

Towards morning we took advantage of a temporary lull to get afloat again, although there was still a sea on that would have been called rough in the English Channel. The wind was still aft, so we cut down our large square-

sail to a 'leg of mutton,' and, lengthening the 'Slug's' tow-rope, shoved off, and for a time made fair progress. Dutchy disconsolately watched our preparations, not daring as yet to venture out in his cockle-shell. Poor little Dutchy! I have often wondered if he reached his destination. I fear not, for we made many inquiries at Circle City, and news travels fast down river. But we never heard of him again.

The lull was unfortunately only temporary. We had scarcely run a couple of miles before it came on to blow quite as hard, if not harder, than yesterday. Reefing the sail, we took to the oars, but made scarcely any headway, for the 'Marjorie' was continually swept by heavy seas, that also dashed the 'Slug' against her, and threatened to knock a hole through her side. We eagerly scanned the shores of the lake with glasses to find a place of shelter, but nothing met the eye on every side but a foaming impassable barrier of breakers. The 'Slug' after her performance of yesterday could not be left to her own devices, and as it was now a question

of 'sink or swim,' we resolved to risk it and run for the land. How we ever reached it remains a mystery, for both boats were oftener under than on the water, and both were waterlogged when the last breaker dashed us, with an ominous crash of splintering wood, against the rocks. Joe, with a long line, made a dash for the shore and had the rope round a tree in a second. The outfit was drenched of course, but the boats were not actually stove in, so, all things considered, we were not so badly off—for Alaska!

Our camping place is not an improvement on the Sandspit, which is still dimly visible through a blur of mist and flying scud. The boats are hauled up into safety with difficulty, for the ledge of rock on which we stand is fully nine feet above the water, but only about thirty feet by twenty in area. The tent is pitched by means of two oars and many loose rocks, and the remainder of the day is devoted to drying our kit —no easy task at a tiny 'Yukon stove.' Late in the afternoon we are startled by the sound of voices raised above the roaring of the wind.

They proceed from Mr. Ash's huge scow, which is making fairly good weather of it under a reefed square-sail, though the seas occasionally break heavily over her bows. Mrs. Ash is seated in the stern ('like Cleopatra in her barge of state,' murmurs the Father), and gracefully waves us a farewell. The scow is doing a good eight knots, and in less than half an hour they have disappeared.

The day drags miserably away. Conversation is impossible (one must shout to be heard) and we have no books, so silent solace is found in tobacco. During the evening the tent is blown down bodily, enveloping us like a huge winding sheet, and is nearly set alight by the smouldering embers of the fire. We do not attempt to re-pitch it, for the sky seems a trifle clearer, and the gale less violent. We therefore roll up in our blankets on the hard slippery rocks, ready to start at a moment's notice. But the tent is up again by breakfast-time, for it is now blowing a hurricane.

Another day goes by. We turn in that night fully prepared to undergo a week in

this dreary prison. But this wild northern land is one of extremes—for good and evil. I am awoke about 3 A.M. by Joe. The boats are already in the water, which is lazily lapping against the rocks, and presents as unruffled a surface as the Thames at Marlow on a fine summer's day, and this although the wind only dropped about midnight. There is now not a breath of air, but by 10 A.M. we have covered a good ten miles at the oars, and the foot of the lake is already in sight. The glorious sunshine now reveals a landscape that for the past three days has been shrouded in dense driving mist. The shores of the lake are of a limestone formation, and its lower end broadens out into a lovely valley trending northwards. The scenery here closely resembles parts of Switzerland. Bennett is fringed with well-timbered slopes alternating with stretches of meadowland. Away on the horizon snowy peaks 8,000 to 10,000 feet high glitter on every side against the cloudless blue, and form a picturesque background to a panorama of sunlit desolation. The air is cool and delicious, the mid-day heat tempered by a soft breeze. One

can scarcely realise that a few short weeks will convert this summery scene into a howling ice-bound waste with the thermometer at 70° below zero.

A hard pull of four hours from here brought us to Caribou Crossing, which connects Lake Bennett with Lake Tagish, the third of the chain. The glorious uncertainty of Alaskan travel is shown by the fact that our journey across Lake Bennett has occupied four days, and we confidently expected to accomplish it in as many hours.

Caribou Crossing, a broad sluggish stream, is three and a half miles long, and so shallow in places that we could scarcely get the boats through. There are, however, deep channels where scows may pass, but these can only be found by sounding and after considerable trouble and difficulty. The Crossing derives its name from the fact that large herds of caribou are said to migrate across the stream at certain seasons.

At 3 P.M. we entered Lake Tagish, and a halt was made for dinner. The meal was hurriedly despatched, for Lake Bennett had inspired us

with a wholesome dread of bad weather and an equally eager desire to get clear of the lakes. And yet I could willingly have lingered for many hours in this beautiful spot. Nature seemed to wish to compensate for her past bad behaviour by treating us to an absolutely perfect day. The sky, as blue as a sapphire, was unflecked by the tiniest cloud, not a breath of air stirred the flowers and foliage at our feet, while the smell of the grass, song of birds, and drowsy hum of insects combined to render our camp a veritable oasis of rest and comfort, seldom met with in this inhospitable land, which seems to resent the presence of man by refusing him the very means of existence.

Tagish Lake, about seventeen miles in length, is, from a picturesque point of view, the finest of the chain. It has several long and narrow extensions, and one of these, which is known as 'Windy-Arm,' is a source of dread to travellers, for it is nearly always swept by a gale. As far back as Juneau we had heard Windy-Arm spoken of with bated breath, and at this point everyone was expecting a *mau-*

vais quart d'heure. As a rule, few pass this spot without having good cause to remember it ; but to-day the lake was like a mirror, and the water so clear and placid that it made one giddy to look over the side of the boat. Gold has been found at Windy-Arm. A quartz ledge with a few dollars to the ton was once located, but afterwards abandoned on account of the difficulty of bringing machinery into the country. The marble deposits here may one day be valuable, for they are numerous and the marble of excellent quality. About midway down Tagish a huge arm or tributary comes in from the south. This sheet of water can be traced for a considerable distance, and is over a mile wide at the junction. Indians say that the Taku runs back for fifty miles and that other lakes lie beyond, but this country is quite unexplored.

Lake Tagish is connected with Lake Marsh by a broad, sluggish stream, about five miles long, bordered by low, swampy banks covered by spruce and cotton-wood trees. About midway is an Indian settlement—a collection of ruined huts—known as 'Tagish Houses,' and practically

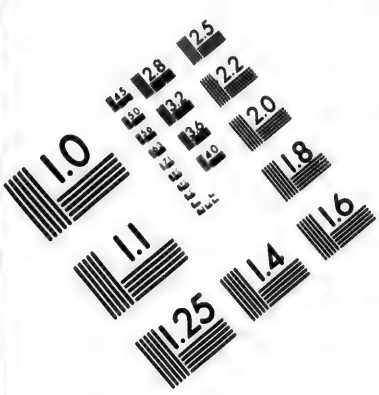
deserted. The Tagish Indians are even of a more degraded type than the Thlinkits, and are now principally found on the coast, where they find it easier to live than in the interior. The half-dozen or so who were prowling about were a ragged miserable-looking set of wretches, very unlike one's preconceived ideas of the 'Child of the Forest' as depicted by Aimard and Mayne Reid. The huts were mostly nailed up, for there is generally not a soul in the place. We landed to try to purchase some caribou meat or fresh fish, and, if possible, utilise a hut as a camping place; but the filth and stench in the one dwelling available soon drove us back to the boat. On the door of one tumbledown shanty the following inscription, scrawled in pencil on a dirty piece of paper, was nailed :—

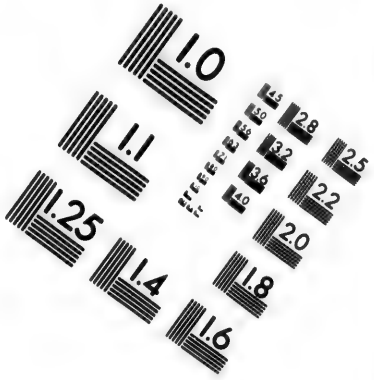
First Charlies House.
i go to 60 mile river.
White man pleas no tak anything.
i come bak in 2 year.

'First Charlie' was probably of a facetious turn of mind, for there was, apparently, nothing to take. With the exception of Thron-Duick

(now known as Klondike), this is the only Indian settlement of any size between the coast and Forty-Mile City.

We encamped towards 10 P.M. on Lake Marsh, a short distance from the mouth of the river, making for a spot where a white tent showed that there was a piece of sound ground; for this is scarce enough on the shores of this swampy lake. It was named Marsh after a celebrated professor of that name by the explorer Schwatka, but the Yukon miners, ascribing the derivation to a more practical source, usually call it 'Mud Lake,' and this is no misnomer. We had to anchor the boats and wade for some distance to land, and had no sooner reached it than the mosquitos swarmed about us in myriads. Those who have not visited Alaska in summer-time can form no conception of the sufferings inflicted by these pests, who now attacked us for the first time and continued to do so incessantly, night and day, until Bering Sea was reached. For the first few days after this, and until we got more or less accustomed to the annoyance, conversation, sleep, and even eating, were quite out of the question. I have camped





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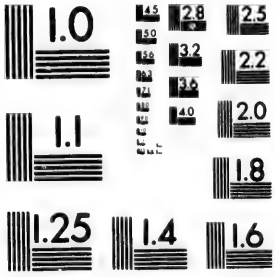

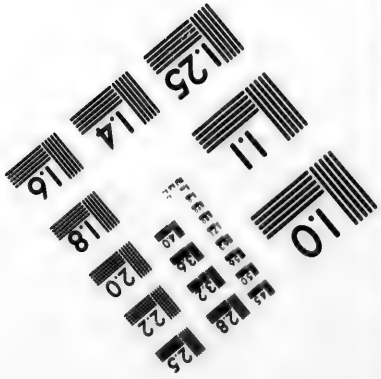

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out after a hard day's work, famished with hunger, and yet unable to raise a mouthful to my lips, owing to the persistent onslaughts of these pests, who are indeed one of the greatest curses of this great northern land. Even the Indians suffer tortures from May until September, but their bodies are smeared with rancid oil, and the smell affords them a protection denied to the white man. A Yukon mosquito will torture a dog to death in a few hours, and frequently drive bear and deer into the water. There is no remedy. We kept a damp rag smouldering all night in the tent, which nearly suffocated us, but had no effect whatever on our tiny enemies. An Irish miner, who occupied the tent we had seen, was lying prone on the ground, face downwards, his supper untouched beside him. The man had been here only two hours, but his hands and features were swollen to twice their natural size; for he had come unprovided with mosquito netting, of which we were fortunately able to spare him a piece. From this day until we reached St. Michael, it was impossible to move a yard without gloves and a veil, and even these only afforded a very slight

protection. There was no rest to-night till a strong breeze set in about 4 A.M. and blew our tormentors away. We then, like the poor Irishman, turned, supperless, into our blankets.

But a still sultry morning brought back the foe in overpowering swarms, which compelled us to pull out on to the lake at a very early hour. While breakfast (which consisted largely of mosquitos) was being hurriedly despatched, a large scow appeared at the mouth of the river, and presently anchored off our camp. This, much to our surprise, contained the Ash party, who had passed us so gaily on Lake Bennett, but had, almost immediately afterwards, met with disaster. The stearing gear had broken, and the scow, rendered unmanageable, had gone ashore on the rocks about four miles below our camp. But for the delay caused by the accident and necessary repairs, they would by now have reached the rapids. Poor 'Cleopatra' looked sadly fatigued and travel-stained, and I regret to add that her language was, on this occasion, far from classical.

A pleasant sail of a few hours brings us,

without mishap, to the foot of Lake Marsh, which is about nineteen miles long. We now enter the Fifty-Mile River, where two awkward rapids must be negotiated before Lake Le Barge is reached. The 'Grand Cañon' and 'White Horse' Rapids are generally looked upon as the chief stumbling-blocks on the river journey from Dyea to the Yukon gold-fields, and, as such, perhaps deserve a chapter to themselves.

CHAPTER IV

THE RAPIDS

The 'Grand Cañon'—The 'White Horse'

'Look out! There's the rag,' cries Joe Cooper from the bows.

In an instant everyone is on the alert, for there is no time to be lost. It takes a sharp pair of eyes to make out a small weather-stained piece of red calico, that some philanthropic miner has nailed to a tree to warn travellers that they are nearing the dreaded 'Grand Cañon.' This primitive danger signal, almost concealed by foliage, is placed, in the usual happy-go-lucky Alaskan style, about 100 yards above the fall, which is invisible, owing to a sharp bend of the river. Once past this bend, a boat is swept headlong into the Cañon, and, if heavily loaded, nothing can save her. A black notice-board, with 'Danger,' in large white letters, prominently

fixed, say, 200 yards above this spot, would have saved many lives; but in this country fatal accidents are seldom taken into consideration until they occur. Many a lonely grave on the banks of the Fifty-Mile River bears witness to this fact; for during this portion of the journey scarcely a day passed that we did not see some cairn or rude wooden cross marking the last resting-place of some drowned pilgrim to the land of gold.

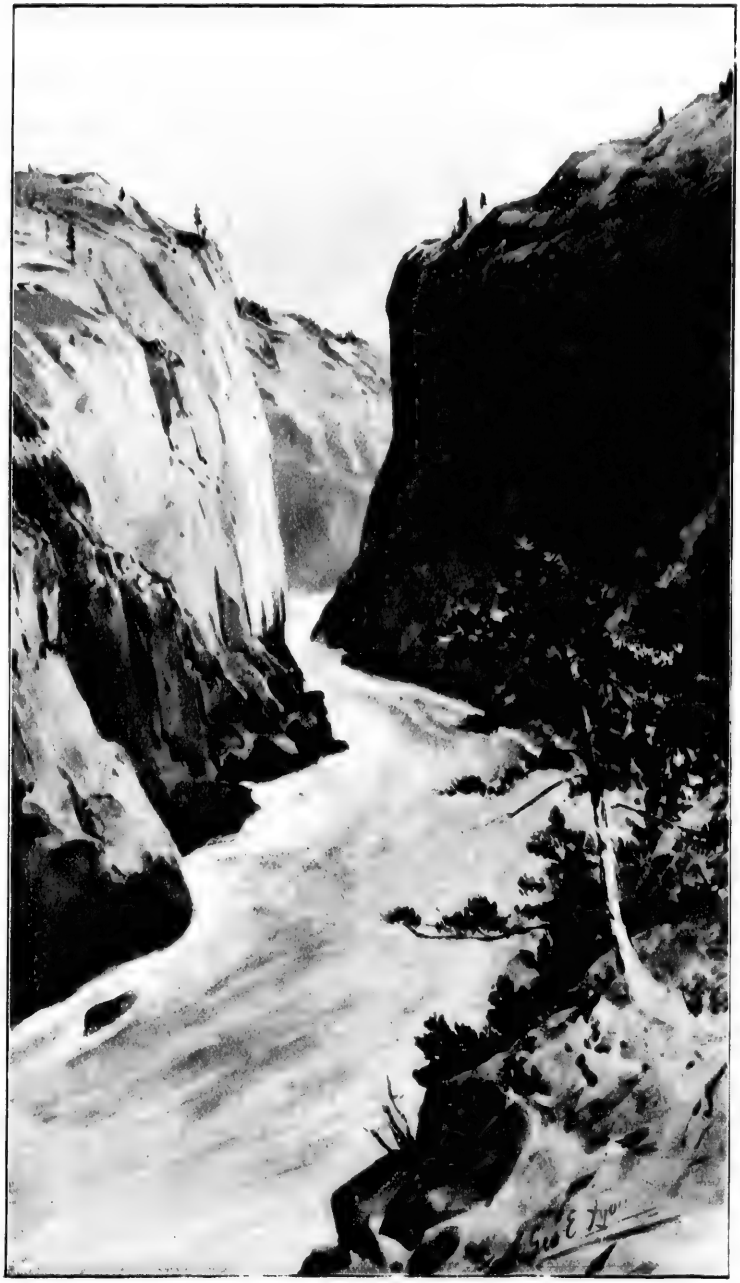
We have lazily drifted here from Lake Marsh, for the force of the current renders a sail useless and rowing unnecessary. The Fifty-Mile River is fringed by steep banks of sand and cement, where millions of martins have built their nests, and appear to subsist entirely (much to our satisfaction) on our *bêtes noires*, the mosquitos. The Grand Cañon is about thirty miles from Marsh Lake. Camping about five miles above the fall on the first night, we reach it early the following day. There is nothing but the aforementioned rag to herald the approach of danger. The roar of the rapid is only heard a few yards off. Only an old experienced hand can detect the

increasing velocity of the boat, or note, here and there, an ominous 'riffle.' The river has an average width of 200 feet, but narrows here to about 70 feet, with perpendicular walls of red volcanic rock. Midway down the rapid is broken by a perilous whirlpool caused by a circular enlargement of the channel. The bodies of those drowned here are never recovered. Some quote this as a proof that there is a subterranean passage for part of the water, but this is purely theoretical.

We make a landing with some difficulty, and only just in time, on the right-hand bank, where several miners are already encamped awaiting fresh arrivals before they run through, for help at the head and foot of the Cañon is almost essential. Lightening the boats, we secure a shady nook for the mid-day meal, for the temperature of 90° in the shade is more suggestive of Aden than Alaska. During dinner, Joe Cooper entertains us with such graphic accounts of the disasters that have occurred here that no one seems anxious to dispute his proposition that he (Joe) and an 'old-timer' friend

from the neighbouring camp shall run the boats through. Indeed, it is unanimously agreed that our guide's preference for an experienced shipmate is, under the circumstances, only natural, and the alacrity with which we fall in with his plan is as spontaneous as it is sincere. Nor does anyone evince keen disappointment on hearing that only two men are required for the job.

There is a portage here of over a mile. Shouldering our packs, Father Barnum, Harding and I set out first for the foot of the rapid overland. A stiff climb of twenty minutes brings us to the edge of a cliff immediately overhanging the mass of roaring breakers and seething foam, and here the noise is so deafening that one must shout to be heard. Cooper and his mate are still visible at our camping place, preparing to embark, so we lay down our packs to rest awhile and watch the run through. There is something terrific in the way the torrent rushes through the place. One wonders not that accidents happen, but that anyone ever reaches smooth water in safety. The force of the current through the dark narrow



THE GRAND CAÑON, OR 'MINER'S GRAVE,' ALASKA

gorge is so tremendous, that the stream (for the entire distance of nearly a mile) is forced to a crest about four feet high in the centre, like a sloping roof. It is necessary to keep on this crest, as several ugly-looking black rocks on either side testify; but the current, fortunately, tends towards it. Harding threw a large log over, which went whirling down for a short distance and was then suddenly sucked under and lost to view. The most powerful swimmer in the world would stand no chance here, and no one who has ever got in has lived to relate his experiences.

Presently we see the 'Marjorie' shove off from the shore. Hardly is she clear than Joe and his companion give way for dear life, Joe steering with a paddle and the other at the sculls, for good way must be got on a boat, before entering the rapid, to keep her straight. A hair's-breadth deviation from the true course, and all is lost. The first pitch is down about fifty feet of smooth water at a steep incline, down which the 'Marjorie' shoots like an arrow. In less than twenty seconds more she is dashing past us at the rate of twenty miles an hour, but

although the little craft is as buoyant as a cork, we can see that her occupants are already sitting shin-deep in water. Suddenly a huge breaker dashes over the bows, and, for a moment of intense suspense, she shivers and dwells, as though about to settle down. But another friendly billow catches her aft, and swings her forward again with a rolling, sidelong motion that brings our hearts into our mouths. For perhaps half a minute we anxiously watch her tearing away on her perilous journey, now perched like a sea-bird on the crest of a wave, now buried in the breakers till only the heads of her crew are visible. Presently the terrible whirlpool, which has been the death of so many, is reached; but the steersman is as steady as a rock, and she nears it, passes it, and leaves it behind her in safety, and the next moment is lost to sight behind the protruding cliffs. Then, with a sigh of relief, we take up our packs, and prepare to rejoin her. When, an hour later, we do so, the 'Slug' has also passed through the ordeal without mishap, and we re-load her preparatory to pushing on to the head of the White Horse

rapids, where a halt is to be made for the night.[1]

If the Grand Cañon has caused many terrible deaths, it has also been the scene of some truly marvellous escapes; notably that of a couple of Swedish miners two or three years ago. These men, not noticing the danger-signal, were swept into the rapid so unexpectedly that their suddenly perilous position deprived them of all thought or action. A party of miners, camped on shore, witnessed the occurrence, and saw them throw their hands up with a gesture of despair, and crouch, paralysed with terror, in the bottom of the boat. The latter, oddly enough, rode the waters in safety until the whirlpool, when, not being steered, it was sucked right into the fatal vortex. All assistance from the shore was, of course, out of the question, and those who saw the accident stood by helpless, momentarily expecting a fatal ending. But after whirling round, at lightning speed, for nearly an hour,

[1] The time taken by the 'Marjorie' to run the Cañon was a little under two minutes, but the 'Slug,' steering badly, took considerably longer, and was once nearly swamped.

the fragile skiff (by one of those unaccountable freaks occasionally indulged in by Nature) was seen to draw clear of the eddy, and the men were eventually landed, half-dead with fright, but safe, at the foot of the fall.

The 'Marjorie' has sprung a slight leak which necessitates calking. Leaving Joe to perform this operation, we cross in the 'Slug' to the left bank, and carrying the tent and a few provisions, set out through the woods for the head of the White Horse rapid, Joe following with the boats and outfit. The distance is under two miles by the river, which runs like a mill-race, but nearer three by land. The trail lies through a dense swampy forest, and half the distance is barely covered when we are literally driven back by clouds of mosquitos. The air is black with the pests, which attack us with almost alarming ferocity. For the first time I no longer doubt Cooper's assertion that the strongest men sometimes break down and give way to tears under their sufferings. Veils and gloves are absolutely useless. They bite clean through dogskin, while a thick sweater and flannel shirt

might be of muslin for all the protection they afford. The torture at last becomes insupportable, and we fly for the open, splashing through morasses at a run, and painfully bruising legs and feet against roots and tree-stumps in the process. Even an 'old-timer' with us confesses that our tormentors are of unusual size and virulence, and on reaching the clearing describes them as being 'as big as rabbits and biting at both ends!' This I can readily believe, for our faces are swollen and disfigured beyond recognition.[1] The tent is soon pitched, and a good fire gives us some relief, although it is necessary to sit right in the blinding, stifling smoke to obtain it. This was perhaps the worst camp during the whole journey for mosquitos. Supper was cooked and eaten only with the greatest difficulty, and as sleep was out of the question, a start was made at five o'clock the following morning.

'Klik-Hās,'[2] or 'very bad,' is the Indian name

[1] In Siberia, I have found the essential oil of cloves an admirable preventive against mosquitos, but in Alaska it is, like everything else as yet tried, quite useless.

[2] Travellers to the Yukon Valley after next year will probably

for the White Horse rapids, which are never run through in small boats except by accident. The river below the Grand Cañon runs through a flat country until it is crossed at right angles by a chain of hills and again forced through the narrow channel forming the rapids. The latter are barely half a mile in length, and so narrow in places that one may almost throw a ball of paper from bank to bank. We drifted our boats down from a rocky ledge, which, covered with sheet ice,[1] made the operation neither an easy nor agreeable one. No one knows (till they have tried it) what strain can be got, under the circumstances, on a 200-foot rope by a light empty boat.

The first plunge into the White Horse is much more abrupt and dangerous than that into the Cañon, and the water dashes down with a terrific roar. The foaming crest of the wave

avoid these rapids altogether, for it would be quite feasible to build a good road or tramway along the eastern bank of the river from above the Grand Cañon to below the White Horse. This will probably be done in the summer of 1898 to connect with the steamers that will then no doubt be plying above and below the rapids.

[1] This extended for some distance down from this point in the backwaters, where it had been washed in great masses, by the strength of the stream.

following the first downward sweep is supposed to resemble a white horse's mane, and this circumstance has christened the fall, but I failed to see the resemblance. The White Horse is also known as the 'Miner's Grave,' which, seeing that a yearly average of twenty men are engulfed here, seems a far more suitable title. When we pushed off the 'Marjorie' she shot into the fall with the speed of an express train, and we trembled for her safety. At one point where there is a sudden drop between two rocks, and the water rushes through like a cataract, she stuck fast for two or three seconds, and began to heel over, but a frantic haul at the line set her straight again and a few moments later she had reached safety in the pool below. The 'Slug' was then lowered down in a similar manner; and, after five hours of this work, under a blazing sun with a temperature of 94° in the shade, no one was sorry to indulge in a few hours' interval for rest and refreshment.[1]

A late start was made next morning, for all hands were pretty well tired out after the exer-

[1] The total fall in the Cañon and succeeding rapids is 82 feet.

tions of the previous day. For some distance below White Horse rapids the current is swift and the river wide, with many gravel bars, the distance to Lake Le Barge being under twenty-eight miles. This was perhaps the pleasantest part of the journey, for the weather was bright and pleasant, as we glided swiftly through a region of rolling hills and under bluffs of sand a hundred feet high, down which the loose material was continually rolling in little landslides. The latter presented a very curious appearance, as of puffs of white smoke issuing from the side of the cliffs, and for a time we took them to be of volcanic origin. About midway down this stretch the Takheena river flows in from the west. The Takheena, which rises in Lake Askell, derives its name from the native words 'Taka,' mosquito, and 'Heena,' a river. It is aptly named, as we discovered when we camped that night on a sandy spit at the junction of the two streams. The Takheena has no rapids of any importance, and is easy of ascent as far as the lake whence it flows. To-day, for the first time, we saw plenty of geese and duck, though far out of range.

The river here teems with fish. During the evening Harding successfully lands a huge monster of weird appearance which Cooper calls a 'Losh,' and pronounces excellent eating. It is therefore duly prepared for breakfast, but we find it coarse and oily, although Joe assures us that the liver, fried, is considered a great delicacy. Father Barnum likens it to a piece of mouldy 'flap-jack,' fried in tallow, which description is, if not appetising, correct. Whitefish and grayling also abound here, and the river above the rapids is famed for its trout, which are both fine and numerous.

At 9 A.M. on July 29, having struck camp at 7 A.M., we enter Lake Le Barge, the last of the chain of five lakes separating the mountain ranges of the coast from the great Yukon river, and realise, with no little satisfaction, that the first and most arduous portion of our journey through Alaska is at an end.

CHAPTER V

LAKE LE BARGE—FIVE FINGERS—FORT SELKIRK

Lake Le Barge[1] is thirty-one miles long, and lies nearly north and south. It is situated over 2,000 feet above sea level, and is surrounded by precipitous mountains, densely wooded to timber-line, with curiously crenelated limestone summits. Towards the outlet the mountains recede, and the foot of the lake is fringed by picturesque valleys, formed partly of pine forest and partly of meadowland. Le Barge (like Bennett and Windy-Arm) has an evil reputation for storms, and travellers are sometimes detained here for days by stress of weather. To-day, however, everything looked in favour of a quick

[1] Lake Le Barge was named after Mike Le Barge, an employé of the Western Union Telegraph Company, who was employed in constructing the overland telegraph line from America to Europe (via Bering Straits) in 1867. The completion of the Atlantic Cable in 1866 put an end to this project.

and pleasant passage. The sky was cloudless, the blue waters just ruffled by a cool steady breeze that kept the sail full, and took us through the water (the 'Slug' in tow) at a very fair rate of speed. On portions of Lake Le Barge a curiously loud and resonant echo may be heard. A cry would be repeated quite a dozen times, clearly and distinctly, and when a rifle was fired, it awakened a perfect salvo of artillery in the adjacent valleys. Towards 5 P.M. we landed for a while on an island half-way down the lake. This island (about four miles long) is, for some obscure reason, shown on the American explorer Schwatka's maps as a peninsula. He even went so far as to name it the 'Richtofen Rocks.' The nearest point of the island to the western shore is quite half a mile distant, and as the extreme width of the lake is only five miles, one can scarcely conceive how the error arose.[1]

A large scow was moored off the island,

[1] In the slate cliffs that project into Lake Le Barge near this spot there are many quartz ledges that look favourable for gold. When the country reaches the vein-mining stage, it is probable that many good mines will be opened up in this locality.

where a gradually shelving pebbly beach afforded an excellent landing. Making our way to where a thin column of smoke was rising from a clump of fir trees, we found a party of miners, bound for Circle City, seated round a camp fire. They had been here, weather-bound, for three days, and invited us to share their supper before resuming their journey. This meal is engraven on my memory, for it consisted of some delicious moose meat, which was a pleasant change from the pork and beans of everyday life. But even as we were discussing the first palatable repast enjoyed since leaving Dyea, a cloud of mosquitos suddenly darkened the air, and the wind dropped as if by magic. The crew of the 'Marjorie' were sorely tempted to trust to luck and indulge in a square night's sleep in these pleasant quarters. But wiser counsel, in the person of Father Barnum, prevailed. The treachery of Le Barge weather is notorious, and it was resolved to push on and pull all night if necessary, to reach river water. Our unfortunate hosts (being dependent on the wind) were of course unable to proceed, and were therefore as badly

off as ever. Their language as they watched us embark, and reluctantly bade us farewell, was quite unfit for publication.

It was just past six o'clock in the evening when we left the island, and I took the first trick at the sculls. We arranged to row in watches of an hour throughout the so-called night; for, as the reader is aware, there is no actual darkness, during the summer, in these regions. The incessant daylight was terribly irksome and wearying after a time; so much so that at Forty-Mile City Father Barnum and I would close the shutters sometimes, and light a candle to escape it, if only for an hour or two.

We pull steadily on over the smooth glassy surface of the lake till about 1 A.M., when the clear twilit sky suddenly darkens, and a terrific thunderstorm, accompanied by the most vivid lightning I have ever seen, alters the complexion of affairs. A thunderstorm in Central Alaska is, like rain, such a 'rara avis' that we are not wholly unprepared for the strong gale that immediately follows. The wind is fortunately favourable; but, no sooner do I hoist the sheet,

than it is torn out of my hands. The waves are rising so rapidly that while there is yet time Joe and Harding scramble into the 'Slug,' leaving the Father and myself to manage the 'Marjorie.' 'Run for the bay!' yells Joe, as he cuts the tow-rope, and the 'Slug' drifts rapidly astern; but instructions are useless, for a dense mist already veils the shore, two miles distant, and the 'Marjorie' is taking in water by the pailful over the bows. 'Let her run before it,' says the Father, philosophically taking up the frying-pan to bale with, 'we are bound to reach land some time or other—if we don't sink!'

And we *do* reach land, but rather sooner than we expect. A few minutes later the 'Marjorie' is brought up all standing with a crash that nearly sends our mast flying. We have run full-tilt on to a sandpit backed by a shadowy black mass that looks like land. 'Jump!' cries the Father, 'jump and beach her!' In a moment I am waist deep, gasping and struggling in icy cold breakers that every moment threaten to carry me off my feet.

Almost simultaneously a rift in the mist discloses a patch of yellow beach, and, lightened of my weight, the 'Marjorie' glides easily forward for a few yards and finally subsides on soft yielding sand. A kindly fate has blown our comrades to the same haven, and shortly afterwards we are crouching over a spluttering fire that Joe has kindled with some damp driftwood.

It is now 7 A.M., exactly twenty-two hours since we left the head of the lake—twenty-two hours of incessant toil, with the exception of a short rest on the island. The mist has now partly lifted, but a grey stormy sky still frowns upon the gloomy landscape, and great white rollers break upon the beach with a sullen roar. Our thin linen tent is wringing wet, so there is nothing for it but to huddle under the lee of the boats, and sleep until the storm abates. The outlook is depressing enough, but Father Barnum is, as usual, resigned, not to say cheerful, under the circumstances. He has named our camping places after the letters of the Greek alphabet. This is Camp 'Ro,' says the good Father, as

he slowly disappears beneath a Hudson Bay blanket; 'and we've been rowing ever since yesterday morning!'

About 4 P.M. the gale moderated. Two hours later we safely entered the Lewes river, the mouth of which was situated barely three miles from Camp 'Ro. Here we abandon the 'Slug,' for which there is no further use, our provisions having already dwindled down to very scanty proportions. This portion of the Lewes is usually known as the Thirty-Mile River, that being the distance from Lake Le Barge to the junction with the Hootalinqua river. For the first ten or fifteen miles below the lake the stream runs like a mill sluice. It was like descending a series of 'chutes,' and frequent snags and sand-bars kept all hands busy. Twice we grounded, and once heeled over at a dangerous angle; but the Hootalinqua was reached at about midnight after an easy, though not over-safe, trip. Landing was no easy matter, owing to the swift current, and we made three unsuccessful attempts. Midnight, however, found us snugly encamped. A roughly made wooden cross close

to our tent had only recently been erected, and bore no inscription. The grave probably contained some luckless miner who had met his death by drowning.

The Hootalinqua river drains Lake Teslin, the largest body of water in the Yukon basin. This river has long excited great interest among prospectors on account of the gold which has been found along the whole length of the stream and its tributaries. About $170,000 have been taken out by the few miners that have been here. I saw traces here of many camps that had been deserted for the richer fields of the interior. The mountains at the head of Teslin Lake form part of the Cassiar range, where the rich Cassiar mines are worked. One may, therefore, reasonably presume that gold will ultimately be found on the Hootalinqua in paying quantities; indeed, several 'old-timers' on the Yukon predict that it will one day prove to be an extremely productive gold-field. For three or four days we travel steadily towards the north-west. It is pleasant enough, now, to lie lazily at full length in the bottom

of the boat, smoking or dozing, and listening to the soothing swirl of the current as it bears us rapidly past wild, but beautiful and ever-changing, scenery. Some little way below the Hootalinqua mouth, Eagle Rock is passed : a huge volcanic crag rent by a great dark cavern, where many grey eagles rear their young. Then comes an apparently endless vista of dark pine forest, succeeded by a panorama of low rolling hills, stretching away to a chain of granite peaks, some thousands of feet high, now streaked with fast melting snow. Then, again, come the low monotonous banks of sand and limestone riddled by millions of martins' nests. A swift run of thirty-three miles from the Hootalinqua brings us to the Big Salmon river, and below this point the aspect of the Lewes is completely changed. The river is generally wider, and occasionally expands into small lakes: perfect gardens of wild flowers, but at the same time prolific breeding places of our tiny foe. The islets are dangerous to approach on account of the log-jams which form one of the chief obstacles to navigation on the Upper

Yukon. Many a boat has been swamped and sucked under by these death-traps, and we give them a wide berth. The Little Salmon river, which flows in from the east, is then reached, and a few miles further down the Nordenskiold river (so called by Schwatka) enters from the westward. This river is one of the few that have retained the name bestowed upon it by the late American explorer. It is known to the natives as the 'Thuch-en-Dituh,' a word signifying 'We hope and expect to meet,' for here the inland natives and coast Indians formerly held an annual rendezvous for trading purposes. The Nordenskiold is an insignificant stream, and its outlet is almost concealed by shoals and weeds; but gold has been found in many of its bars, and coal has also been discovered, and worked in small quantities, in its vicinity.

The Five Fingers Rapids[1] are now the only serious obstacle between us and salt water, and these are reached early on July 2. Here a ledge of rock stretches right across the Lewes, afford-

[1] Erroneously called 'Rink Rapids' by Schwatka.

ing but one or two narrow outlets for the swollen current. The name of these rapids is derived from five tower-like masses of rock, rising from the aforementioned ledge, that are situated, at intervals of a few feet, from shore to shore; but the native name 'Yeth-Katze' owes its origin to the number of these birds that breed on the islands. The safest passage is made by hugging the right bank, but a landing should, under any circumstances, be made fully fifty yards above the rapid to lighten the boat. A steep and difficult (but short) portage leads to the foot of the fall, which was run in safety and without shipping a cupful of water. This was our last portage, for the Rink Rapids, six miles below, although they look ugly enough at a distance, can be shot in safety with a loaded boat. Neither of these rapids is considered dangerous, for there is no record of anyone being drowned at either. In the opinion of some, Five Fingers could even, with some trouble and expense, be made available for steamboat traffic. From Five Fingers to the mouth of the Pelly river is under sixty miles. Just below the rapids the Tatshun

river comes in from the east, and here and lower down stream we found open breezy camping places free from mosquitos, which enabled one to enjoy a night or two's rest: an unattainable luxury up-river. The day before reaching the Pelly, a white tent surrounded by gaily coloured flags is sighted on the right bank. 'Some miner celebrating the day,' says Father Barnum (for it is July 4 [1]). 'Let us land and help him.' But the stranger is either asleep or of a solitary disposition, for our hails are unheeded. 'I'll soon rustle him up!' says Cooper, drawing on his gum-boots and splashing ashore; but he is back in a moment, with an oath on his lips. 'It's only a dead Siwash,' [2] he grumbles, resuming his steering paddle, while I scramble up the steep slippery bank to inspect the strange burial-place. The corpse is that of a young, powerfully built Indian, and has evidently lain there for some days, not longer, for its thin drill covering is as white as snow. Near him are his rifle, snowshoes, and an old Huntley & Palmer biscuit-box; contents unknown. The sight is not a pretty one or

[1] Anniversary of American Independence. [2] Indian.

conducive to a prolonged examination, and we are soon under weigh again. The Father informs us that the Alaskan Indians (like the Eskimo) always bury their dead in prominent positions, and in a spot commanding as fair a view as possible.

A few hours after this the junction of the Pelly and Lewes rivers is reached at Fort Selkirk, and we are now fairly launched on the waters of the Great Yukon river, which from this point pursues a course of about 1,650 miles to Bering Sea. The country about the confluence is flat and marshy, and the Yukon, below the junction, is but one quarter of a mile wide and has an average depth of ten feet. The Pelly was discovered and named as early as 1840 by Robert Campbell, who descended it in 1843, and five years later established Fort Selkirk for the Hudson Bay Company. Fort Selkirk, which figures bravely on the maps, is simply a collection of perhaps a dozen ramshackle log-huts surrounding a neatly built mission house. The so-called Fort, once a flimsy stockade, was destroyed by Chilkat Indians many years ago, and

has never been rebuilt. A fallen chimney marks the spot where it once stood.

We found the place almost deserted. A couple of Siwashes were hoeing a potato patch, and four white men sunning themselves outside the shanty which is dignified by the name of 'Store,' where provisions may occasionally be procured at starvation prices. To-day, however, a few mouldy beans and some musty flour formed the stock-in-trade, for nothing in the shape of food had arrived from civilisation for over ten months.

Fortunately it is possible to raise a few vegetables at this post, and potatoes and turnips have been grown with a success unattained by gardening operations further inland. Market gardening would be profitable enough here with more customers, for potatoes fetch 3*l.* per bushel at all seasons of the year. Much trouble is, however, entailed in raising a garden crop on the Yukon. The soil must be constantly irrigated from the river, and it is also necessary to blanket the plants in early spring and late autumn with the greatest care. Nevertheless the potatoes

grow here to a very fair size. An acre will produce two hundred bushels.

The four strangers looked very woebegone as they rose and hobbled to meet us, clothed in filthy rags, with bare heads and arms, and faces raw from mosquito bites. The poor fellows had clubbed together and risked their all to work gold up the Pelly river, but their boat and everything she contained was lost in a rapid after a month's journey up-stream, and they had returned to Selkirk on a rude raft, after terrible sufferings and privations, without a penny left. Their plans for the future were vague enough, but they displayed extraordinary fortitude and even cheerfulness under the circumstances. We further consoled them, for a time at least, with a few greenbacks and some plug tobacco. A few paces from the store is (or was) a Church of England mission. The following notice was nailed to the doorway:

ST. SAVIOUR'S MISSION.

Church of England.

A short service in English is held every Sunday afternoon at 2.30.

Those, however, in need of spiritual comfort must have fared badly. The pastor of this gloomy parish had apparently (to use a French term) 'taken the key of the fields,' and, judging from the dusty, neglected interior of the chapel, had been absent for at least some months. The mosquitos here were unbearable, and we speedily followed the reverend gentleman's example and departed from this unsavoury settlement—the first one, by the way, that we had come to since leaving Dyea, over 400 miles distant. Fort Selkirk is now called Pelly, and is regarded as the head of navigation; but a river steamer seldom gets as far up as this.

Below Fort Selkirk the Yukon river is from five to six hundred yards wide, and maintains this breadth to White river, a distance of ninety-six miles. Numerous well-wooded islets are passed, and there are many gravel bars. The current here is much slower than that up-river, averaging only about four miles an hour. The Upper Ramparts of the Yukon begin at the mouth of Pelly river. These are perpendicular walls of rock that follow the north bank for

eighteen miles. The face of this curious formation, which rises straight out of the water, is as smooth as polished marble, and there is not a crevice or approachable opening for the entire distance. The summit of the Ramparts consists of grassy plains or steppes stretching away far inland, to a range of lofty, rugged hills.

White river, which enters from the west, is about two hundred yards wide at the mouth. White river is a swift muddy stream several hundred miles long. Its waters are of a greyish colour (hence its name) and discolour the Yukon for many miles below the junction. Copper is said to exist in large quantities in this district. Here we observed a peculiar phenomenon, for which we were not unprepared, as it has been noticed by many previous travellers. The water for perhaps a hundred miles below the embouchure of White river gives out a kind of hissing sound not unlike freshly opened soda-water. No one seems able to explain this. Some say that it is caused by minute particles of sand grating against the bottom of the boat; others attribute it to volcanic causes, and the latter are probably

nearer the mark. It seems strange that, so far, no serious attempt has been made to elucidate the mystery.

Between White and Stewart rivers, a distance of ten miles, the Yukon is a mile wide, and is a maze of islands. Stewart river, which enters from a spacious valley to the eastward, has been excellently prospected, but has up to the present time been exploited chiefly by the 'Grub-staker.' It was pretty well worked during the seasons of 1885–86 by about forty men who took out about 25,000*l.*, and this in a very p nitive fashion. 'Old-timers' predict that, when machinery is brought on to the scene of operations, the Stewart river will outrival Klondike, for this district is exceptionally rich in gold-bearing quartz. In 1887 a man named MacDonald explored the Stewart river for a considerable distance, and found it and nearly all its tributaries navigable for light-draught steamers. There are (according to MacDonald) no rapids of any importance, and the current is not at all swift. In 1896 a party of about twenty men were placer-mining about a hundred

miles from the mouth, and this is the only work that was then being done on this stream.

About twenty miles below the Stewart Sixty-Mile Creek enters from the west. This so-called 'Creek' is about a hundred miles long and very winding, with a swift dangerous current and many rapids. Very rich gold discoveries have been made here, and there is a claim on Miller Creek (a tributary of Sixty-Mile) from which over 30,000*l.* has been taken by a single individual. Glacier, Gold, and Bed Rock Creeks are other tributaries of Sixty-Mile which continue to show admirable results.

There is a store and sawmill at the mouth of Sixty-Mile, and here we halted for the midday meal. We found a few miners lounging about on the bank. They had come down from the Sixty-Mile diggings to await the arrival of the steamer which makes (or then made) one trip a year to this point with a year's supplies. The arrival of the boat creates the wildest excitement; and no wonder, for these men were reduced to the verge of starvation, and had received no news of any kind from the outer world for many weary months.

We had hoped to replenish our larder here, but were ourselves compelled to part with a portion of our scanty store. The storekeeper, a wiry-looking fellow, with keen eyes and a pleasant smile, attired in rags and gum-boots, was chafing at the tardy arrival of his yearly consignment of pork, flour, and other luxuries. We dined in his parlour, a bare, comfortless room, furnished with a rickety bench and table, and embellished with newspaper woodcuts pinned to the grimy walls. Our host opined that the 'Alice' might arrive before our departure, but ten days were destined to elapse before her white hull rounded the dreary, pine-fringed river. We waited till evening, however, and then re-embarked to drift down to a place then known to perhaps a score of white men, but now a byword throughout the civilised world. 'So long, mates!' cried the disconsolate storekeeper, with a friendly wave of the hand; and I saw him slouch back to his dismal abode with a feeling of pity for one whose life must be passed amid such cheerless, desolate surroundings. My pity was, perhaps, misplaced; but who could then foretell the dazzling discoveries of the next

few months, or picture the golden Valhalla which this lonely backwoodsman was unconsciously nearing? For our dejected friend no longer relies upon the sale of beans and bacon as a means of existence. He is now known as the 'Klondike Millionaire,' and his name is Joseph Ladue.

We paddle lazily down-stream through the steely grey twilight until a spot apparently clear of mosquitos is descried. We are no sooner encamped, however, than the pests descend upon us in myriads. The tent is hermetically closed and a 'smudge'[1] kindled, but its fumes gradually become unbearable, and although the Father and Harding are peacefully slumbering, I am forced to quit the noxious atmosphere. Outside it is cool and pleasant, although the air resounds with the song of venomous legions. Cooper has preceded me and is down by the river, where I presently join him. The 'old-timer' is busy with a gold-pan, even at this midnight hour, and is so absorbed that my approach is unheeded.

[1] A piece of rag steeped in oil and left to burn slowly away under a covering of damp moss.

RIVER TRAVEL IN SUMMER ON THE YUKON

Joe starts at my touch, and looks up with an eager, anxious expression, very unlike his usual placidity of feature. 'Do you see that?' he whispers excitedly, pointing to some tiny particles of shining metal at the bottom of the pan—'*That is gold!*'

CHAPTER VI

KLONDIKE

About noon on July 5, the sight of human habitation once more gladdens the eye, and a low line of log shanties appears on the right bank of the river. Here, Joe informs us, we may possibly succeed in replenishing our meagre stock of provisions. The natives of this village subsist almost entirely on salmon, which during certain seasons abound in the vicinity; so much so that 'Plenty of fish' is the literal translation of the name given to this settlement by its Indian founders. The current is so strong that we land only with difficulty and the help of a couple of men in a birch-bark canoe—the first of these graceful but rickety craft yet encountered. Just below the village a small river flows into the Yukon from the east. The water looks so deliciously

clear and pure that we fill the water-bucket and then proceed in search of food, which indeed is our primary object for landing. In one of the huts a piece of moose meat is found, in another some dried salmon (for the latter have not yet appeared this year), while a third furnishes (wonders will never cease!) a tiny sack of flour. There is an air of clean prosperity about the dwellings which contrasts strangely with the filthy wigwams up-river. Most of the young 'braves' are away hunting and fishing, but we are soon surrounded by a ring of old men and maidens eager for news from the coast. Here the sole topic of interest seems to be, not nuggets, but fish, and, strange as it may seem, the name of Thron-Duick is chiefly associated in my mind with clean Indians and a good square meal. For the beauty of the place was then unmarred by the squalid white settlement across the stream, which, like most Alaskan mining camps, suggests a bit of Shadwell or Limehouse dropped into the midst of sylvan scenery, and which is now known throughout the world as

Dawson City—chief town of the district of Klondike.[1]

When the 'Excelsior' steamed into the Golden Gate on the morning of July 14, 1897, San Francisco was at first inclined to regard as a 'fake' the reports she brought of fabulous gold discoveries in the far North-West. The thirty odd miners the ship contained were set down by many as disciples of Ananias. Their tales of fortunes made in a day, of pans of $500 and of mushroom cities, were looked upon as fairy-tales, until the golden spoil was actually displayed at Selby's smelting works and found to be worth half a million dollars. Even after this ocular demonstration some were sceptical enough to discredit the statement that greater riches were on the way down from the north.

[1] It is curious, in view of recent events, to read Mr. O'Gilvie, the Dominion Surveyor's report of this place in 1887. He says:

'Six and a half miles above Reliance the Thron-Duick River of the Indians (Deer River of Schwatka) enters from the east. It is a small river about forty yards wide at the mouth and shallow; the water is clear and transparent and of a beautiful blue colour. The Indians catch great numbers of salmon here. A miner had prospected up this river for an estimated distance of forty miles in 1887. I did not see him.'

Three days later, however, the arrival of the 'Portland' at Seattle, with over a million dollars, changed doubt into certainty, and the wonderful news was flashed over the world. Then followed a stampede the like of which has not been witnessed since the days of '49. First San Francisco, then New York, and finally London, caught the fever, and caught it so badly that time seems to increase rather than diminish the virulence of the disease. The fact that the gold was found in a primitive fashion, and brought down anyhow: in oil-cans, jam-tins, and even wrapped in old newspapers, seemed to offer a special attraction to men of moderate means. The lack of capital and proper mining appliances seemed to point to a poor man's 'El Dorado.' Consequently a large percentage of those who went in with the first batch of gold-seekers are tradesmen, office clerks and others whose sedentary occupation utterly unfits them for a life of privation in the frozen land where Nature guards her treasure so well. On the Pacific slope last summer, however, no one thought of the dangers attendant on a journey

into Alaska, dangers which, for many years past, have associated the name of 'Yukon' with an ugly sound in Western America. Everyone, from the prosperous merchant to the penniless loafer, was 'gold-mad.' Warnings from the experienced as to perilous passes and treacherous waterways were lightly ignored, with (as time has shown) deplorable results. So great was the rush from San Francisco and Seattle, that homeward-bound passengers from St. Michael were scarcely able to land owing to the press of those struggling to take their places on the outgoing steamers. In the interior of Alaska the excitement was even more intense. The two principal settlements, Forty-Mile City and Circle City, were practically deserted. Men who had been in a chronic state of drunkenness for weeks were pitched into boats as ballast and taken up to stake themselves a claim. Valuable claims in other parts of Alaska were abandoned by experienced 'old-timers,' who should have known better, and who have perhaps already lived to regret the day when the magic word of Klondike was carried into camp; for in the great

North-West, as in other lands, 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'

When news of the Klondike gold-strike reached me in an obscure French village, through the medium of that somewhat dreary and depressing journal the Paris 'New York Herald,' I was inclined to disbelieve the whole story, not only on account of its American origin, but also because the suddenness of the gold-finds has been truly remarkable. When I travelled through the country in 1896, a man who had scraped together 6,000*l.* or 7,000*l.* after four or five years' hard work was looked upon as a 'rara avis,' and the largest nugget then found weighed under thirty ounces. The attention of prospectors was mainly centred on Circle City (in American territory), and, while Klondike had no meaning in the ears of the civilised world, there were not 10,000 white men to be found in the entire Yukon district from Fort Selkirk to Bering Sea. Everyone knew there was plenty of gold. The difficulty was to locate it in sufficient quantity to repay others than the poor grub-staker, who digs literally for his daily

bread, and is satisfied with just enough to keep body and soul together. Up to the summer of 1896, quite two-thirds of the Yukon prospectors belonged to this class.

The presence of fine float-gold in the river sands of Alaska was discovered by the Hudson Bay Company officials many years ago, but no mining was done till about the year 1873. In 1880 important finds took place near Juneau, and from this period up to the present day gold has cropped up in all directions both in the interior and on the coast. In 1886, Cassiar Bar, on the Lewes river, was opened, and a party of four took out 1,200*l.* in thirty days, while other neighbouring bars did fairly well. Stewart river was also first prospected about this time, and it is estimated that in 1885 and 1886 this river yielded over 25,000*l.* In 1886 coarse gold was reported on Forty-Mile Creek. Three or four hundred miners were collected there in 1887, and all did well, although no extraordinary finds are recorded.[1] Some fair-sized nuggets were found, however, and also gold-bearing

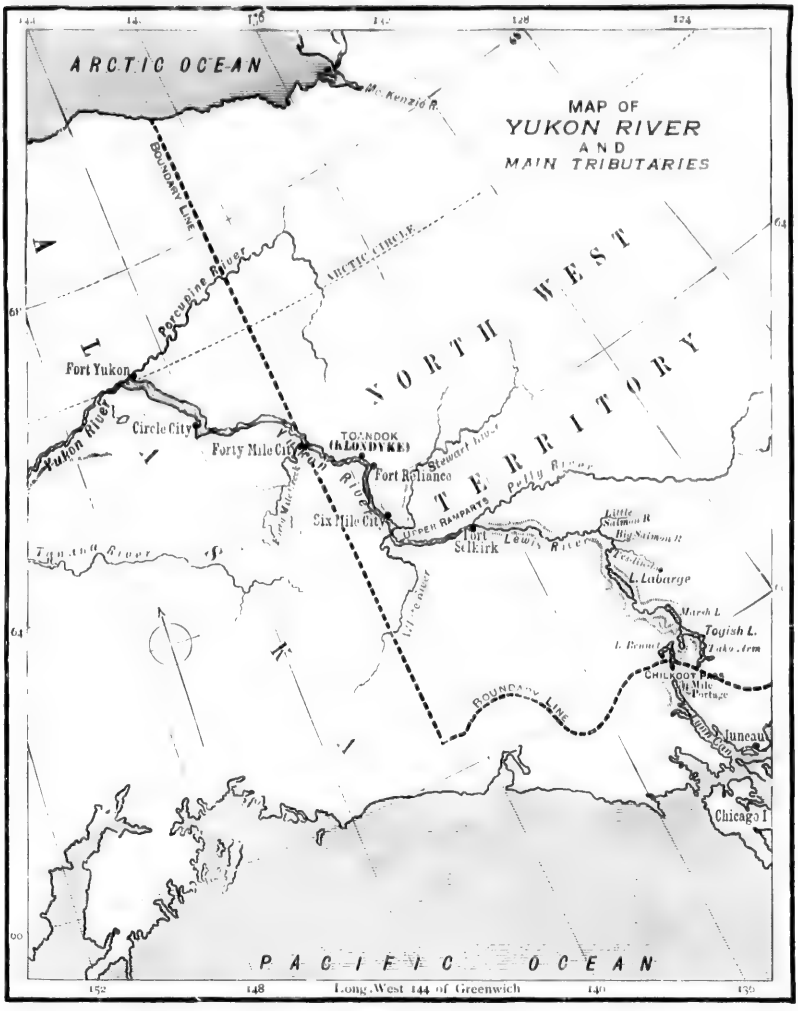
[1] About 30,000*l.* was taken out during this year.

quartz, which resulted in the establishment of the trading port now known as Forty-Mile City.

It must not, therefore, for a moment be imagined that Klondike is the only place in Alaska where gold is found. It is all over the country, from Sitka to the Arctic Ocean, and from Mackenzie river to the Bering Sea. Up to now, however, the Yukon basin has been the centre of attraction, and, indeed, there is scarcely a spot upon its upper waters where you can wash a pan out without finding *some* deposit. The Yukon river may (from a mining point of view) be divided into three parts: (1) The upper section (in British territory), containing the Lewes, Stewart, and Klondike rivers, and Forty-Mile City; (2) the middle section, from the American boundary to the Tananá river, comprising Birch Creek, other tributaries of varying importance, and Circle City; and (3) the lower section (also in American territory), down to Bering Sea. The gold taken from the three sections amounted in 1894 to about 75,000*l.* In 1897, from January to April 1, the Klondike dis-

trict alone yielded 1,000,000*l.* sterling, and this although under five hundred men were at work.

The Klondike gold-fields are in British territory, fully sixty miles east of the American boundary, so that, notwithstanding the ravings of New York 'Jingoes,' there need be little fear of international complications. The first important discovery in the Klondike region was made in 1896 by one George Cormack, a miner, and an 'old-timer' on the river. Cormack formerly kept a store just above Five Finger Rapids, where he traded with the Indians and worked at developing a coal-vein in the vicinity. Just prior to his great 'strike' Cormack was living at the village of Klondike, fishing and drying salmon for a living. He had married a 'squaw,' and by this means had attained a certain position among the natives, who first led him to the scene of his success. Cormack had only a very defective apparatus to wash the gravel with. The gravel itself he had to carry in a box on his back from thirty to a hundred feet. Notwithstanding this, 240*l.* was obtained in eight days, and Cormack says that



THE YUKON RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

(Reduced from a Map drawn by Mr. Stewart Menzies at Fort Selkirk in October 1895)

Dawson City is situated on the River Yukon, just below the name Klondike. Skagway Bay is at the head of the Lynn Canal, and the White Pass starts from that point

with proper appliances he could have got 1,000*l.* Cormack's first rich strike was made on Bonanza Creek, a tributary of the Klondike river, which latter is a swift stream about 150 miles in length.[1] About four hundred claims have been staked on Bonanza, which is about twenty-five miles long, and joins the Klondike a couple of miles from its mouth. El Dorado, an affluent of Bonanza, about seven miles long, has been magnificently prospected, and the richness of these placers are truly marvellous. According to Mr. W. O'Gilvie, the Dominion Surveyor, three pans[2] on El Dorado have yielded 41*l.*, 42*l.*, and 43*l.* respectively, while many others ran up around 10*l.* 1*l.* to 1*l.* 10*s.* was an average result. Other tributaries of the Klondike—'Hunker,' 'Gold Bottom,' 'Bear,' and 'Last Chance' creeks—are all staked out, and will probably prove to be of great value. They have already yielded 8*l.* to 10*l.* to the pan, and on Hunker Creek 5*l.* was

[1] There are, as yet, no mines actually on the Klondike river, which is too large and deep to admit of placer mining.

[2] A 'pan' is of sheet iron, about eighteen inches in circumference and four or five inches deep. It costs $3 at Juneau. In ordinary placer mines ten to fifteen cents a pan is considered fair pay.

panned in a few hours from the surface, taking a handful here and there. About forty miles up the Klondike 'Too Much Gold Creek' has been staked out. According to latest advices from Dawson City, reports of fabulous wealth were received from this remote creek, but it would be premature to place too much credence in them until next spring. A quartz lode, however, showing free gold in paying quantities has been located on one of the creeks. The quartz has been tested over 20*l.* to the ton. The lode appears to run from three to eight feet in thickness, and is about nineteen miles from the Yukon. Another quartz mine known as the 'Four-Leaf Clover,' on the west side of the Yukon, opposite the mouth of the Klondike, also promises to yield excellent results.[1]

Mr. O'Gilvie, the Dominion Surveyor, is a personal friend of mine, and a thoroughly practical man, not given to exaggeration. The

[1] Both gold and silver bearing quartz have been discovered near Sixty-Mile River, and a specimen of gold-bearing quartz found near White River assayed the enormous value of 3,000*l.* *to the ton.* It was taken from a seam nearly 2,000 feet above the Yukon water-level.

following extract from one of his latest reports may therefore be relied upon. Mr. O'Gilvie says:

'Since my last the prospects on Bonanza Creek and tributaries are increasing in richness and extent, until now it is certain millions will be taken out of the district in the next few years. On some of the claims prospected the pay dirt is of great extent and very rich. One man told me yesterday that he washed out a single pan of dirt on Bonanza Creek and found $14.25 in it. Five to seven dollars per pan is the average on that claim, it is reported, with five feet pay-dirt and the width yet undetermined, but known to be thirty feet; even at that figure the result at nine to ten pans to the cubic foot, and 500 feet long, is $4,000,000 at $5 per pan. One-fourth of this would be enormous. Enough prospecting has been done to show that there are at least fifteen miles of this extraordinary richness, and the indications are that we shall have three or four times that extent, if not all equal to the above, at least very rich.'

But this is not all. I have it (on the same

authority) that as much as $560 was washed out of one pan at Klondike, and that this marvellous gold zone extends for quite 500 miles. 'One thing is certain,' concludes O'Gilvie; 'we have one of the richest mining areas ever found, with a fair prospect that we have not yet discovered its limits.'

It is satisfactory to note how completely Mr. O'Gilvie's predictions regarding Alaska and the North-West provinces have been realised. No less than nine years ago he wrote:

'I think it may with confidence be asserted that rich finds will yet be made of both coarse gold and gold-bearing quartz. It is not likely, in the nature of things, that such a vast extent of country should have all its fine gold deposited as sediment, brought from a distance in past ages of the world's development. If this is not the case, the matrix from which all gold on these streams has come, must still exist, in part at least, and will no doubt be discovered, and thus enrich this otherwise gloomy and desolate region.'[1]

[1] A large creek called Indian Creek joins the Yukon midway

It is probably unnecessary to explain that, with one or two exceptions, the gold in Alaska is obtained by 'placer mining.' This consists simply in making a shaft to bedrock [1] and then tunnelling in various directions. The pay-dirt is handed out by a small hand-windlass and piled up until it is washed out. I am indebted to my friend Mr. Joseph Ladue for the following description of the various processes that follow excavation:

'The miner lifts a little of the finer gravel or sand in his pan. He then fills the latter with water and gives it a few rapid whirls and shakes. This tends to bring the gold to the bottom on account of its greater specific gravity. The pan is then shaken and held in such a way that the sand and gravel are gradually washed out, care being taken as the process nears completion to avoid letting out the finer and heavier parts that have settled to the bottom. Finally, all that is left in the pan is gold and some black sand

between the Klondike and Stewart rivers, and all along this creek good pay has been found. It would yield about five or six hundred claims.

[1] The depth to bedrock varies from four to twenty feet.

which almost invariably accompanies it. This black sand is pulverised magnetic iron ore. Should the gold thus found be fine, the contents of the pan are thrown into a barrel containing water and a pound or two of mercury. As soon as the gold comes in contact with the mercury it combines with it and forms an amalgam. The process is continued until enough amalgam has been formed to pay for "roasting" or "firing."

'It is then squeezed through a buckskin bag, all the mercury that comes through the bag being put into the barrel to serve again, and what remains in the bag is placed in a retort, if the miner has one, or, if not, on a shovel, and heated until nearly all the mercury is vapourised. The gold then remains in a lump with some mercury still held in combination with it.

'This is called the "pan" or "hand" method, and is never, on account of its laboriousness, employed when it is possible to procure a "rocker" or to make and work sluices.

'A "rocker" is a box about three feet long by two wide, made in two parts, the top part being

shallow, with a heavy sheet-iron bottom, which is punched full of quarter-inch holes. The other part of the box is filled with an inclined shelf about midway in its depth, which is six or eight inches lower at its lower end than its upper. Over this is placed a piece of [illegible]y woollen blanket. The whole is then mounted on two rockers, resembling those of an ordinary cradle; and when in use they are placed on two blocks, so that the whole may be readily rocked. After the miner has selected his claim, he looks for the best place to set up his "rocker," which must be near a good supply of water. He then clears away all the stones and coarse gravel, gathering the finer gravel and sand in a heap near the rocker. The shallow box on top is filled with this, and with one hand the miner rocks it, while with the other he ladles in water. The finer matter with the gold falls through the holes on to the blanket, which checks its progress, and retains the fine particles of gold, while the useless matter passes over it to the bottom of the box, which is sloping, so that what comes through is washed downwards and finally out of the box.

Across the bottom of the latter are placed thin slats, behind which some mercury is placed to catch any particles of gold that may escape the blanket. If the gold is nuggetty, the large nuggets are found in the upper box, their weight retaining them until all the lighter stuff has passed through. Smaller ones are held by a deeper slat at the outward end of the bottom of the box. The piece of blanket is occasionally rinsed into a barrel, and, if the gold is fine, mercury is placed at the bottom of the barrel, as already mentioned.'

'Sluicing' is the best method of placer mining and is always employed where possible. It requires a good supply of water, with sufficient head or falls. The process is as follows :—

'Planks are procured and made into a box of suitable depth and width. Slats are fixed across the bottom of the box at intervals, or holes bored in the bottom in such a way as to preclude the escape of any particle of gold. Several of these boxes are then set up with a considerable slope, and are fitted into one another at the ends like a stove-pipe. A stream of water is then thrown

into the upper end of the highest box, the dirt being shovelled in and washed downwards at the same time. The gold is detained by its weight, and is held by the slats or in the holes aforementioned. If it be fine, mercury is placed behind the slats or in these holes to catch it. In this way about three times as much dirt can be washed as by the rocker, and consequently three times as much gold may be secured in a given time. After the boxes are done with they are burned, and the ashes washed for the gold held in the wood.'

These methods seem simple enough, and no doubt would be in more temperate regions; but it should be mentioned that the mines of the Yukon are of a class by themselves, and it is necessary to follow entirely new methods for getting the gold. It was formerly considered impossible, on account of climatic conditions, to work after the month of September, but it is now conclusively proved that much may be accomplished during the dark sunless winter. The working year is, therefore, three times as long as it used to be, and the time formerly devoted to drink and

debauchery is now profitably employed. The difficulty of winter mining is, of course, enormously increased by the fact that the ground is frozen. Every foot of it must be thawed, either in sinking or drifting, by small fires. The shallower mines are worked during the summer in the open air, but when the gravel is more than six feet deep, a shaft is sunk and dirt enough removed to allow space to work in. Thus the gold-seeker with a log hut close to the mouth of his shaft, and provided with plenty of fuel, may pass a whole winter (if food be forthcoming) in comparative comfort. About a ton of dead ground can be dumped daily, and a few hundred pounds of pay-gravel. The latter is piled up until the spring when the thaw comes. It is then 'panned' or 'rocked' without difficulty; for here, unlike Western Australia, there is no lack of water. The winter in Alaska usually sets in very suddenly. In 1896 the Yukon was blocked by ice as early as September 28, and one of the river steamers was unable to regain the port of St. Michael, where these vessels are generally laid up.

North of the Klondike river at its junction with the Yukon, and on the right bank of the latter, stands the now world-famed city of Dawson. The shanty which formed the nucleus of the Klondike metropolis was erected by Mr. Joseph Ladue on September 1, 1896, and was destined by that gentleman as a kind of annexe to his store at Sixty-Mile. When the gold-strike followed, and within a few weeks five hundred dwellings sprang up as if by magic, no one was more surprised than the storekeeper himself. To be 'on the ground' meant everything in this case, for there is no other eligible site for miles. Thus Mr. Ladue holds 178 acres and the Government the remaining twenty-two, and as town lots now fetch from 20*l.* to 2,000*l.* each, the lucky backwoodsman is likely to 'remember the 1st of September' for some time to come!

Dawson City is named after Dr. Dawson, who first established the boundary between Alaska and the North-West Territory, this being due north from Mount St. Elias to Point Demarcation to the 141st meridian. In general appearance Dawson much resembles most

Alaskan settlements, although it wears a more prosperous air, and is perhaps better laid out, than its poorer neighbours Forty-Mile and Circle Cities. There are the usual 'Stores,' 'Hotels,' 'Restaurants,' and 'Saloons' to be found in every mining camp, from Coolgardie to Cripple Creek. Here these establishments are perhaps more squalid than usual, and would pass unnoticed but for the flaming banner that invariably floats over the low roof and proclaims, in large white letters, the proprietor's business. There is at present but one store of any importance at Dawson, that of the 'Alaska Commercial Company,' who have, up till now, practically controlled the entire trade of the country. On this store all who go to Dawson without provisions must mainly rely, and many will probably do so before the year is out, with disastrous results. Last June Dawson contained a population of over 3,000, but this is now largely increased. There seems to be an impression in England that the diggings are quite close to the settlement; but this is incorrect. The richer creeks are fully fifteen

miles away and a hard day's journey from the city.

Although the climate of Dawson is naturally severe, a man may live, with proper precautions, comfortably enough through a winter in Alaska. I know at least a dozen 'old-timers' who have spent six consecutive years in the country; for the cold has been greatly exaggerated. Eighty degrees (Fahr.) below zero is about the severest yet experienced; but this is very rare, and here, unlike Canada, there is seldom the wind which makes even 20° below zero unbearable. Mr. Ladue has chopped wood in his shirt sleeves at 70° below zero and has experienced no great discomfort, and I am acquainted with two men (who, I believe, are now at Dawson) who wintered on the Yukon in a thin canvas tent.[1] Winter generally commences in October (but often much earlier), and the Yukon is usually clear of ice by the middle of May; but this is also uncertain. The snow-fall is not excessive,

[1] The greatest continuous cold yet registered in Central Alaska was in February 1890, when the daily mean for five consecutive days was 47° Fahr. below zero.

three feet being considered deep. The winter days are very short, there being but two hours between the rising and setting of the sun; but it is never pitch dark, and the lovely Northern Lights are common. In summer the temperature often reaches 80° (Fahr.), but the nights are cool and pleasant. The days are then twenty hours long, with twilight the remaining four. Mosquitos are as bad at Dawson as anywhere on the river, with, perhaps, the exception of Fort Yukon.

Little credence need be placed in the sensational stories that have been circulated regarding the insalubrity of Klondike. One English newspaper reported over 2,000 deaths in the district during the winter of 1896-1897, when, as a matter of fact, there were not 1,200 people there to die! That there will be—nay, has already been—terrible suffering at the gold-fields during the winter of 1897-1898, no one can doubt. I am informed, by the highest authority in Washington, that *the last sack of flour was sold in Dawson City on September* 10 *last.* Since that date no

supplies have reached the place (owing to the grounding of two new steamers), and Dawson is now unapproachable until next spring, when even the most sanguine Canadian and American officials expect to receive news of a nature too terrible to contemplate. There is nothing to be done for the present, and we can only hope for the best, and thank Providence that (according to the latest advices) most of the women and all the children have been moved down to Fort St. Michael, where there is no lack of food or lodging. The only women now in Dawson City refused to leave, and belong to a class with which mining camps are, unfortunately, only too familiar.

Starvation and hardship, however, can scarcely be classed as actual disease, which latter is responsible for only two deaths at Klondike up to August 1897. Both were from natural causes. In the burial-ground at Forty-Mile City (which has served for the whole section for years past) I saw only thirty odd graves, which shows that (from a health point of

view) Central Alaska is by no means an undesirable residence.

On the other hand, no person with weak lungs or subject to rheumatism should think of wintering in the country. According to my friend Surgeon Wills, of the Canadian Mounted Police (who has a large and varied experience), the commonest complaints are bronchitis and pneumonia, arising from exposure; debility and dyspepsia, caused by improperly cooked food; and scurvy,[1] brought on by want of fresh meat and vegetables, and unventilated, over-heated dwellings. There are only too many of the latter; for the regulation miner's hut is only about fourteen feet by twelve feet and six feet high, and is occupied by three, and often four men. Fevers and infectious diseases are practically unknown. Only one case of typhoid occurred at Forty-Mile City during the year 1896, and this was traced to impure drinking water.[2] The following ex-

[1] Lime juice is always very dear and often unobtainable in the Yukon settlements. It is therefore well to take at least a pound of citric acid crystals and two or three ounces of oil of lemons. This makes an excellent anti-scorbutic drink.

[2] Since the above was written some dozen cases of typhoid

tract from Surgeon Wills's last report may prove of interest to those contemplating a visit to Klondike. The Doctor says:

'Men should be sober, strong and healthy. They should be practical men, able to adapt themselves quickly to their surroundings. Special care should be taken to see that their lungs are sound, that they are free from rheumatism and rheumatic tendency, and that their joints, especially knee-joints, are strong and have never been weakened by injury, synovitis, or other disease. It is also very important to consider their temperaments. Men should be of cheerful, hopeful dispositions, and willing workers. Those of sullen morose natures, although they may be good workers, are very apt, as soon as the novelty of the country wears off, to become dissatisfied, pessimistic, and melancholy.'

For men of frugal mind, who eschew the drink and gambling saloons, Dawson City is by no means so expensive a residence as might be imagined. I speak, of course, of last

fever have occurred at Dawson City, owing to defective sanitation and overcrowded dwellings.

summer, when provisions were obtainable, not of the present time. The cost of living was then from 1*l.* to 30*s.* per day, although even then luxuries were expensive. A ten-cent cigar cost a dollar, which was also the price of a shave, while a small drink of villainous whisky fetched 2*s.* Some of the saloons were taking 400*l.* a day; and I may here mention that Joe Cooper, my old travelling companion, had up to last August realised over 5,000*l.* by the sale of refreshments—chiefly of an alcoholic nature. Wages are proportionately high to the price of necessaries. An ordinary labourer can easily earn his 3*l.* or 4*l.* a day; and many of those who came in penniless worked steadily for a few weeks until they could purchase a claim of their own, and have since 'struck it rich.' I am indebted to Mr. Ladue for the following scale of prices in Dawson City, which, I repeat, applies only to the summer of 1897:

'*A Store Price List*'

Dawson City, July 1897.

	£.	s.	d.
Flour (per 10 lbs.)	2	10	0
Moose ham (per lb.)	0	4	0

	£	s.	d.
Caribou meat (per lb.)	0	3	0
Beans (per lb.)	0	1	0
Rice (per lb.)	0	1	6
Sugar (per lb.)	0	1	6
Bacon (per lb.)	0	2	0
Butter (per lb.)	0	6	0
Eggs (per dozen)	0	8	0
Salmon (each)	0	6	0
Potatoes (per lb.)	0	1	6
Turnips (per lb.)	0	1	0
Tea (per lb.)	0	10	0
Coffee (per lb.)	0	3	6
Dried fruits (per lb.)	0	3	0
Canned meats (per can)	0	4	0
Lemons (each)	0	1	0
Oranges (each)	0	2	0
Tobacco (per lb.)	0	7	0
Liquors (per drink)	0	2	0
Shovels	0	10	0
Picks	1	5	0
Coal oil (gallon)	0	5	0
Overalls	0	7	0
Underwear (per suit)	2	10	0
Shoes	1	0	0
Rubber boots	3	0	0

Dawson City, like Juneau, is not wanting in so-called amusements at night-time. There are already two theatres there, to say nothing of numerous dancing saloons, gambling hells, and dens of a worse description. The saloons are of the true mining-camp type, with a bar at one end, flanked by the inevitable gold-scales.

Money is not used here, only gold-dust, which fetches about 3*l.* 8*s.* an ounce. The space in front of the bar is surrounded by benches and used for dancing, but behind, in a dingy stuffy den, the gambling 'lay-out' is generally to be found. 'Poker' and 'Faro' are the favourite games, but 'Roulette' is also very popular. Two and three hundred pounds are often staked on a single turn of the wheel, and the loss of a couple of thousand pounds in a night is (or was) of common occurrence. The 'Dance-hall fairies,' as they are called, who frequent these establishments, are women of the lowest class, the very sweepings of the Pacific slope; but here, unlike Circle City, they are kept well within the bounds of decency by the Canadian Mounted Police. An edict issued by Inspector Constantine to discard 'bloomers' and wear skirts created great indignation amongst these Alaskan 'houris,' and it was necessary in some cases to carry out the order by forcible means.

Notwithstanding these unavoidable exceptions, Dawson City is probably the most orderly and well-governed mining camp in the world.

There are many towns of boasted civilisation in the Western States of America where life and property are far less secure than at Klondike. This is chiefly owing to the exertions of the Canadian Mounted Police, whose arrival in camp was resented by the raffish element, but heartily welcomed by the more reputable portion of the community. There is little chance now for evil-doers. The rule against carrying fire-arms is rigidly enforced, and to this law is probably due the fact that, since the founding of Dawson, there has only been one serious shooting affray; and, indeed, there is really no necessity for a revolver in or out of the city. A kind of freemasonry, chiefly engendered by the precarious life in a land where mankind and nature are ever at war, exists amongst the miners of the Yukon. The latter are as unlike the typical gold-digger, bristling with oaths and revolvers, as they can well be. The Alaskan prospector is, like his placer mines, of a class by himself; reckless of danger possibly, inured to privation without a doubt, but outwardly as quiet, orderly, and well-behaved as a Sunday School teacher. Murder and theft are

practically unknown in the Yukon Valley. Thousands of pounds' worth of gold dust may be lying about, but no one ever dreams of locking a cabin door. When a thief is caught he is given twenty-four hours to leave the settlement, failing which he is hanged to the nearest tree; but, for obvious reasons, there are not many thieves, for miner's law, on the Yukon, is seldom tempered with mercy. One rarely hears of the shooting scrapes that have made famous California and the Wild West, from the days of '49 to Cripple Creek. In Alaska, a man may go on the spree, indulge in too much 'tanglefoot,'[1] and shoot a comrade by accident, but 'guns' are rarely used in earnest except for game. There is a *camaraderie* among the Yukoners, a kind of brotherly affection, which was well exemplified by an old miner I met this year at Montreal. We were discussing the chances of those who had succeeded in crossing the Chilkoot and White Passes this summer, and I observed that, at any rate, a third of the prospectors were supplied with food enough to ward off starvation.

[1] Rye whisky.

'What is the good of that?' growled my old friend (he hailed from Forty-Mile City); 'they will have to share what they have got with the others!'

It may be well, before concluding this chapter, to give a few instances of lucky 'strikes' made in Klondike, *for which I can vouch*. English people have come to regard news transmitted from New York as exaggerated, and not unreasonably so; for the unreliable trash published by most American newspapers is justly proverbial, and only to be equalled by the aggressive impertinence of the so-called journalists who compile it, and who render life a burthen to the unhappy stranger in the United States. The following instances, however, have been verified for me by competent authorities at Ottawa, and I do not, therefore, hesitate to place them, with absolute confidence, before the reader.

It is a curious fact, although one I believe not peculiar to Klondike, that during the past year more rich strikes have been made by 'tender-feet'—or new-comers in the country—than by the more experienced miners. Indeed,

in many cases, the latter have been guided by the former to some of the best paying claims. Many of the older prospectors (men who had been in the country for several years) were of opinion that Bonanza Creek was too wide and deep to be of much account, but their theories have been entirely upset by the results. 'You can't tell anything about gold,' said one grizzled old veteran, after one of the marvellous 'clean-ups' from this creek had electrified the world; 'you're just as likely to find it where it *ain't* as where it *are*!'

It is no exaggeration to say that *everyone* who has staked out a claim on either Bonanza or El-Dorado this year has turned out over 2,000*l*., the majority of course much more. Thus far Mr. Clarence Berry is the Barnato of the Klondike. Berry was earning a modest livelihood as a fruit-raiser in California. Three years ago wonderful stories of the riches of Alaska reached Berry's ears—riches only to be obtained by those brave enough to risk a terrible death from cold and starvation. Berry had nothing to lose and everything to gain. His capital was only 8*l*., but he managed to

borrow another 12*l.* from a man who was afraid to go with him, but who advanced the money at a fabulous rate of interest. Berry started with forty companions, but the timid turned back, and by the time the party reached Lake Bennett they had dwindled down to three. When Berry reached Forty-Mile City he was alone, the others having died on the way.

While at Forty-Mile Berry heard reports of the marvellous gold deposits that have since been brought to light. But there was a girl, far away in California, who had promised to be his wife within a certain time. A letter was therefore written telling his 'fiancée' of the boundless possibilities of Alaska, and without a moment's hesitation, but much against the wish of her parents, Miss Ethel Bush travelled by sea and up the Yukon river to Forty-Mile City, where the pair were married.

Berry and his wife were among the first to reach Klondike. They took 26,000*l.* from only one of his claims. The first prospect gave 8*s.*, then 12*s.*, to the pan; and this rose suddenly to 5*l.* and 10*l.* the pan. One day Mr. and Mrs. Berry

took no less than 120*l.* *from a single pan of earth.* Mrs. Berry herself lifted out 10,000*l.* from her husband's claim in her spare moments. This was her amusement during perhaps the strangest honeymoon that has ever been recorded. Mr. Berry has many claims on the Klondike, and it is confidently anticipated by competent judges that he will one day be one of the richest men in the world.[1]

Alexander MacDonald, on Claim[2] No. 30, El-Dorado, started drifting with four other men. The five together took out 19,000*l.* in twenty-eight days. The ground dug up measured but forty square feet.

William Leggatt, on Claim No. 13, El-Dorado, together with two other men, purchased a claim for 9,000*l.* They could not pay the whole amount in cash, but made a deposit of 400*l.* and

[1] I learn from Mr. Ladue that Mrs. Lippy (whose husband has a claim valued at 200,000*l.*) and Mrs. Berry picked out of a dump 1,200*l.* each, in a few days after their arrival. They found the metal by poking around in the dirt with sticks. I cite this instance to show how much valuable material was discarded in the wild rush for Bonanzas.

[2] Creek and river claims are 500 feet long and extend in width from base to base of the hill or beach on each side, but a discoverer is entitled to 150 additional feet.

agreed to pay the balance of 8,600*l.* before July 1, 1897. This was agreed to. They sank a shaft, and *at once* took out at the rate of 200*l.* per day. By May 15, 1897, they had netted 12,400*l.*, and the space of the claim worked was only twenty-four square feet.

A young man (a friend of Mr. Ladue's), who went to the Klondike during the summer of 1897, writes that for seven consecutive days he took 360*l.* a day from his claim.

Of other authentic cases, I may mention that of a San Francisco man and his wife who have this year taken out 27,000*l.* and have not worked half their single claim, and that of a stoker on board one of the river steamers, who when I met him on the Yukon was earning 10*l.* a month. He is now worth 30,000*l.*

T. S. Lippy, who, when I knew him at Forty-Mile in 1896, was living a hand-to-mouth existence as a day labourer, brought down 1,300*l.* in the 'Portland,' and has claims valued at 200,000*l.* as yet untouched. F. G. Bowker, who came with him, brought 18,000*l.*, while his claims also unworked are said to be worth 100,000*l.* Over

a score of others cleaned up over 10,000*l.* between September 1896 and July 1897.

I could cite many more instances of this kind, but enough has been shown to prove that (judging from the fact that the soil at Klondike has only been, so to speak, scratched) Dawson City is one day destined to rival, if not surpass, Coolgardie and Johannesburg in the history of mining operations.

I have found it quite impossible to reply to the numberless letters that have reached me during the past few months, from unknown correspondents asking for advice as to the best means of reaching Klondike. I will therefore conclude this chapter with a few remarks upon the subject. There is no use disguising the fact that, to quote an 'old-timer's' expression, 'Alaska is no soft snap.' Unless a man is prepared to face daily, almost hourly, hardships and difficulties, he had far better remain at home. There is probably no country in the world so replete with discomforts and annoyances of every kind, and I would strongly urge those projecting a visit to the gold-fields

to take into serious consideration the immense distances to be traversed—distances that must be covered by dint of sheer hard labour. In time, travelling facilities will no doubt be greatly increased, but we can scarcely hope to find much improvement next spring when the great rush will take place. A definite route into the country has not even yet been fixed upon.

The most direct route from England is from Liverpool to New York or Montreal, thence by Canadian Pacific Railway to Victoria, B.C., whence small steamers run frequently to Juneau and Skagway. For those who intend to brave the passes the middle or end of February will be the best time to start from this country. Those going by sea *via* St. Michael need not think of leaving until April. Bering Sea is closed by ice and St. Michael unapproachable by water until the middle of June (and sometimes later), and one can scarcely conceive how the public can be gulled into securing passages by steamers advertised to leave the Pacific ports for Klondike in March, when navigation

beyond the Aleutian Islands only opens (at the earliest) about the middle of May.

As regards outfit, do not take anything that is not absolutely necessary. Remember, also, that everything you require can be procured at Juneau from men who do nothing but fit out prospectors for the Yukon, and therefore thoroughly understand the business. A couple of large oilskin bags, such as sailors use, will be found useful; two or three thick tweed suits, plenty of flannel underwear, six pairs of wading stockings, and a good strong hunting knife had better be got in London; also a couple of pairs of *hair* (*snow*) *goggles*, to be obtained from Silver & Co., Cornhill, E.C. The latter are light and unbreakable, and infinitely more comfortable than glass or wire.

Fire-arms are absolutely useless for all the game you will see on the Yukon, and will only load you up unnecessarily. Recollect that on this journey every pound is of importance. It is forbidden to carry a revolver at Klondike, nor is one needed at any of the mining settlements in Alaska.

No one should think of travelling alone. Three is the best number, for it just fits a comfortably sized boat, and there is always a spare man in case of accident or sickness. Four is not too many, but this number is quite sufficient for one party.

The best route into Alaska is a very vexed question. There is so much difference of opinion, that, until next spring, it would be premature to offer any advice on the subject. The White Pass is now said to be worse than the dreaded Chilcoot, and no man should attempt the passage of the latter unless he be endowed with steady nerves and inured to the severest fatigue and privations. It would, perhaps, be wise for those who have led sedentary lives, or are not blessed with the strongest constitutions, to make up their minds to lose a few weeks' time and travel round to Klondike by sea and river—*via* St. Michael's. Two new routes, however, one over the Daulton trail, and the other *via* the Stikine river and Glenora to Teslin Lake, have been favourably reported on by Canadian surveyors, and one of these

may possibly be opened up by the late spring of 1898.

In conclusion, no man should dream of venturing into Alaska who cannot land on the scene of operations with at least a clear 100*l.*, after paying his passage money, outfit, and all incidental expenses. In other words, a capital of *at least* 300*l.* is needed by everyone who intends to try his luck at the New Eldorado, and, in the words of Joe Ladue, 'Double that sum is better still, if he can raise it!'

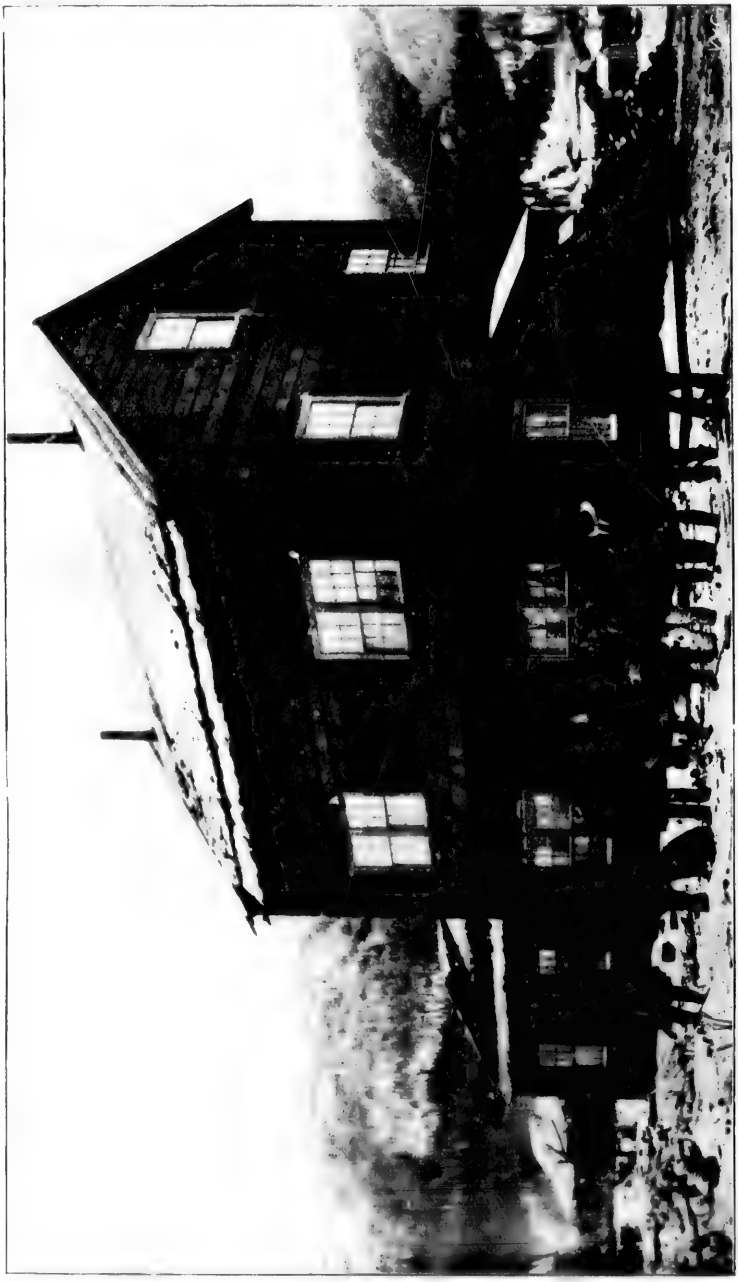
CHAPTER VII

FORTY-MILE CITY—CIRCLE CITY—KOSEREFSKI—FORT ST. MICHAEL

ANY pleasant visions of civilised comforts which its imposing title had inspired were rudely dispelled on arrival at Forty-Mile City. The latter is situated about forty miles below Dawson, on the left bank on the Yukon, and consists (like most Alaskan 'cities') of a collection of eighty or ninety dismal-looking log huts on a mud-bank. The shanties are scattered about anyhow, with no attempt at regularity, the marshy intervening spaces being littered with wood shavings, empty tins, and other rubbish, while numerous tree-stumps show the recent origin of this northern mining camp, which is, however, the parent settlement of the interior, having been founded in 1887. Huge placards with the

words 'Hotel,' 'Saloon,' and even 'Opera House' (the latter a 'dive' of the lowest description) adorn some of the larger dwellings, where, though bread is often lacking, whisky is never scarce.

Forty-Mile City is in British territory. It is populated (or was, at the time of my visit) by a few hundred gold-miners, a detachment of the Canadian Mounted Police (who, I need hardly say, are *un*mounted here), the 'employés' of the Alaska Commercial Company, a score of saloon keepers, and a few ladies of doubtful reputation, who make things pretty lively during the dark sunless winter. The gold-seekers then return with their clean-up of the precious metal, which is only too often squandered in drink and debauchery until empty pockets herald the return of spring. Since 'winter mining' has come into fashion, however, the profits of the gambling saloons and similar establishments have shown a marked decrease, and the 'Forty-Miler' is more provident than formerly. But even men of frugal mind find it hard to make both ends meet here, where provisions



THE ALASKA COMMERCIAL COMPANY'S AGENCY, FORTY-MILE CITY, N.W.T.

cost half their weight in silver, and often fetch more than ten times their value in gold.

The Alaska Commercial Company has an agency here, a two-storied wooden building, where we were welcomed by the Agent, and made as comfortable as circumstances and the scarcity of provisions would permit. For the first up-river steamer had not yet made her appearance, and the little food remaining from the winter's store was necessarily, even at our host's hospitable board, jealously doled out. Thanks to Father Barnum, the Catholic mission, a tiny log house, about thirty-five feet by eighteen feet, offered us sleeping accommodation, and, the priest in charge being absent on a tour of inspection, there was plenty of space to stretch our weary limbs and revel in the temporary absence of mosquitos, which, although they swarm in the adjacent woods, seldom trouble the settlement to any great extent.

Forty-Mile is a city of roof-gardens; not of the fashionable kind usually associated with female beauty, electric light, and Hungarian bands; but gardens of a more practical, if less

ornamental, nature. The Yukon roof-garden was invented to keep out the cold, and effectually does so. Moss is generally used for caulking the sides of a Forty-Mile residence, and a thin layer of it laid all over the flat roof. About a foot of loose dirt is placed over this, which, when the dwelling is more than a year old, is covered with a rank growth of weeds.

A facetious American newspaper man that I met at Forty-Mile prophesied that, in the prosperous days to come, the mowing of the roof will be one of a householder's regular duties.

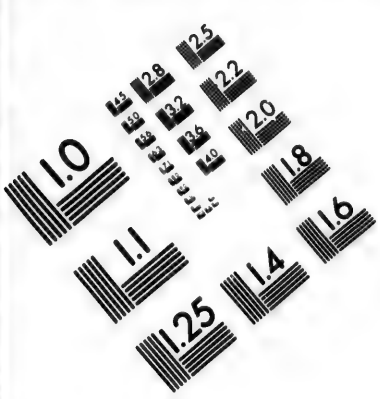
Forty-Mile was long the chief town of the Upper Yukon in the palmy days of the 'Hudson Bay Company,' when furs rather than gold attracted the white man to these desolate regions. In 1888 the number of diggers on Forty-Mile Creek (a river about two hundred miles long that enters the Yukon just below the town) and its tributaries became sufficiently great to induce the 'Alaska Commercial Company' to establish a trading post. In the summer of 1892 the 'North American Trading Company' followed suit and founded a settle-

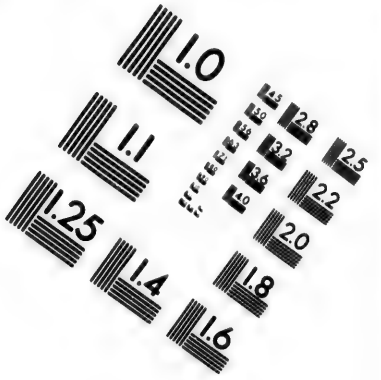
'ARCTIC SUMMER,' NEAR FORTY-MILE CITY

ment about three-quarters of a mile down stream, which was named after Mr. John Cudahy, the well-known Chicago merchant, and one of the directors of the company. A fort was erected here in 1895, and is occupied by twenty-five men of the Canadian Mounted Police, under the command of a captain [1] (who acts as governor of the district), two subordinate officers and a surgeon. The fort is of wood, and surrounded by a stockade surmounted by the Union Jack, which floats at Fort Cudahy, over the most northerly garrison of the British Empire.

Time passed drearily enough at Forty-Mile, for there was nothing to do during the long sunny days but to wander wearily up and down the bank watching in vain for the steamer, and varying the proceedings with occasional shots with a revolver at bottles thrown into the stream. Some of the riverside huts were literally torn up and thrown on their sides by ice, which, when it breaks up in May is swept down the Yukon at a terrible pace. At this season the

[1] This officer's salary of 24*l.* per month, to include everything, seems a scarcely adequate one, considering his onerous duties, and the ruinous cost of provisions.





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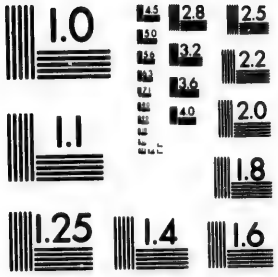

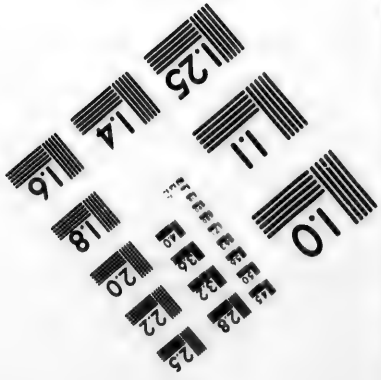

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shores are generally flooded to a depth of several feet, and the huge blocks, some of them many feet high, come tearing down with an irresistible force that detaches whole acres of forest, and carries death and destruction into many a mining settlement. The sight is described as one of wild and terrible grandeur, but few who have witnessed it at close quarters ever care to repeat the experiment. All nationalities are represented at Forty-Mile—Americans, French, Germans, Russians, and Swedes—but I saw only one Englishman, the brother of a well-known barrister, who had given up mining for a while and taken to photography with much success.[1] Most of the miners were away on their claims, but it was amusing at times to enter a saloon and listen to the babel of tongues. As news from the outer world was quite eight months old, the conversation was generally restricted to two subjects: the scarcity of provisions and the abundance of gold. Heated arguments were frequently evoked by the latter, but the former

[1] The illustration depicting 'An Arctic Summer' is from a photograph taken near Forty-Mile by this gentleman.

BREAK-UP OF ICE ON THE YUKON RIVER

(for obvious reasons) created little discussion. Although, towards the small hours, men were frequently the worse for liquor, in these establishments I never once witnessed a brawl of any description, and during my whole journey down the Yukon never saw a blow struck in anger.

Forty-Mile 'Creek' is about one hundred and fifty yards wide at its mouth, and its current is strong with many small rapids. One of the latter, about eight miles from the Yukon, has drowned many miners. The distance from shore is trifling, and the fall not very great; but there are many sunken rocks, and most of the fatalities occurred on account of the icy cold water, which renders a man helpless in a very few seconds. The diggings are distant fifty to one hundred miles up the valley, and the method of reaching them is by 'tracking' or 'poling,' or by both methods together. In 'tracking' the boat is towed by one man, while another, walking near the beach, keeps the boat well out from shore with a long pole; or a man may stand in the boat and propel it by pushing

against the bottom. Poling is generally employed in travelling up-stream, and so adept do the men become that they sometimes cover fifteen or twenty miles a day against a swift current.

Forty-Mile and its tributaries have been mined with fair success for the past ten years; but, although there are still many valuable claims to be had for the asking, the recent rush to Klondike has almost depopulated the district. The latter, however, cannot fail to become one of the utmost importance, for it contains large quantities of gold-bearing quartz. The following extract from a recent report of the Dominion Surveyor, Mr. W. O'Gilvie (who was residing at Forty-Mile City during my visit, and from whom I obtained much useful information) bears witness to this fact:—

'Gold-bearing quartz has been found in Cone Hill, which stands midway in the valley of the Forty-Mile river, a couple of miles above its junction with the Yukon. The quantity in sight rivals that of the Treadwell mine on the coast, and the quality is better, so much so that

it is thought it will pay well to work it even under the conditions existing here. Indications in sight point to the conclusion that the whole hill is composed of this metalliferous rock.'

A later report says:—

'Assays of the Cone Hill quartz are very satisfactory, and the quantity good for generations of gold; were it on the coast the Treadwell mine would be diminutive beside it. If it starts and proves successful, there are scores of other places that may yield as well. An expert here who prospects for the North American Trading and Transportation Company found a ledge last spring on the *Chandindu* river of Schwatka[1] (known as Twelve-Mile Creek here), and located two full claims on it. He told me the assay he made of many specimens of it was much more satisfactory than that of Cone Hill, and this ledge, he claims, is where a commencement should be made in quartz-milling in this country. There would be no fear of the result.'

[1] This stream flows into the Yukon (about thirty miles above Forty-Mile) from the westward. Good specimens of coal in fairly large quantities have been found on Twelve-Mile Creek.

We had heard, while at Juneau, of a *mountain of gold* near Forty-Mile City, and, not unnaturally, dismissed the story as a pure fabrication. The existence of Cone Hill, however, proves that the tale was not altogether without foundation.[1]

Five, six days passed away without signs of the steamer, which was now nearly three weeks overdue. Grave doubts as to her safety were expressed by the Alaska Company's Agent, and the jests that had been made on our arrival as to the probability of sacrificing the weaker members of the community for food began to fall rather flat. For provisions were getting dangerously scarce, and matters were growing really serious, when on the morning of the seventh day a thin column of grey smoke appeared above the fir-fringed horizon, and a few hours later the 'Alice' had reached her destination. No sooner

[1] In 1886 few of the men in Forty-Mile Creek were content with ground yielding less than 3*l.* per diem, and several had taken out nearly 20*l.* a day for a short time. With the few men at work, and their exceedingly limited facilities, this little stream, in 1887, gave up about 30,000*l.* in gold. At this time the total number of miners in the entire territory of the Upper Yukon was less than two hundred and fifty, and none of them wintered there.

THE ALASKA COMMERCIAL COMPANY'S STEAMER 'ALICE.'

was the ungainly vessel moored to the steep muddy bank than her decks were thronged with an eager crowd of both sexes, almost as anxious to obtain news from the outside world as the more substantial necessaries of life. The steamer had been delayed by heavy ice on the Lower Yukon—a most unusual occurrence so late in the year. The river is generally quite clear for navigation by the end of June, but in Alaska one can never depend on the regularity of the seasons.

The river steamers of Alaska are not luxurious. Their accommodation would savour of actual hardship to one fresh from civilisation; but the coarse lodging and coarser fare on board the 'Alice' were very acceptable after a month in the open, passed under circumstances compared to which the roughest work in other wild lands is mere child's play. Nevertheless I would gladly, after the first two or three days, have exchanged my stuffy malodorous quarters on board the 'Alice' for a six-foot space under the flimsy canvas tent we had discarded at Forty-Mile City. A crowd was, of course,

unavoidable under the circumstances; but much of the discomfort and all the dirt might have been avoided with little trouble and less expense. The so-called 'state-rooms,' comfortless dens, swarmed with vermin, while it was necessary at meal-times to fight for a place at a greasy deal table strewn with the remnants of past meals, from which a famishing dog would have turned in disgust. I am grateful to the Alaska Commercial Company for many favours. Their hospitality to the stranger in that lone northern land is justly proverbial, and my journey from the Pacific Ocean to Bering Sea was not only successfully but rapidly accomplished under their kindly auspices. I cannot, however, refrain from pointing out an evil in their otherwise admirable administration, which, I feel sure, were it known at the head office in San Francisco, would be quickly remedied.

The 'Alice' was, like all Yukon steamers, a broad flat-bottomed stern-wheeler of very light draught, for near Fort Yukon and towards the Delta there is frequently only three to four feet

of water, even in the deepest channels. A 'first-class' fare from Forty-Mile to St. Michael's costs 20*l*., and as freight is 30*l*. a ton, the Alaska Commercial Company, who own four out of the five boats on the river, have no cause to complain. The season no doubt is short, and each vessel can only make, under the most favourable circumstances, three round trips throughout the year; but they are generally so crammed with passengers and cargo that the Company's receipts must be enormous.

About fifteen miles below Forty-Mile we pass a large mass of rock on the left bank. Schwatka called this 'Roquette Rock,' but it is known to miners and others as the 'Old Woman,' a very similar mass on the west bank being known as the 'Old Man.' I am indebted to Mr. W. O'Gilvie for particulars of the following Indian legend from which these curious landmarks derive their names:—

'In remote ages there lived a powerful "Shaman," this being the local name for what is known as "Medicine man" among the Indians

farther south and east.[1] The Shaman holds a position and exercises an influence among the people he lives with somewhat akin to the wise men or magi of olden times in the East. In this powerful being's locality there lived a poor man who had the great misfortune to have as wife an inveterate scold. He bore the infliction for a long time without murmuring, in hopes that she would relent, but time seemed only to increase the affliction. At length, growing weary of the unceasing torment, he complained to the Shaman, who comforted him, and sent him home with the assurance that all would soon be well.

'Shortly after this he went out to hunt, and remained away for many days endeavouring to get some provisions for home use, but without avail. He therefore returned, weary and hungry, only to be met by his wife with a more than usually violent outburst of scolding. This so provoked him that he gathered all his strength and energy, and gave her a kick that sent her

[1] Medicine men are also known as 'Shamans' throughout Northern and North-Eastern Siberia.

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'CHARLEY,' INDIAN CHIEF, FORTY-MILE CITY

clean across the river. On landing she was converted into the mass of rock which remains to this day a memorial of her viciousness and a warning to all future scolds. The metamorphosis was effected by the Shaman; but how the necessary force was acquired to send her across the river (here about half a mile wide), or whether the kick was administered partly by the Shaman and partly by the husband, history does not relate.'

No river of any size joins the Yukon between Forty-Mile City and the boundary line that separates the British and American possessions. There is only one stream, Coal Creek, about five miles below Fort Cudahy, which enters from the east, and upon which extensive coal seams have been found. The international complications and discussions that have attended the partition of the Alaska boundary are now a matter of history. Anent this subject Mr. O'Gilvie (the British representative on the Boundary Commission) was good enough to furnish me with a few facts, which

from such an undeniable authority can scarcely fail to interest the reader.

It would appear, according to the Dominion Surveyor, that the partition has been attended with the greatest difficulty. That portion of the boundary running across the north-western part of the North American continent, from the Pacific to the Arctic Ocean, is simply a geographical line defined in the Anglo-Russian treaty of 1825 as the 141st meridian of longitude west of Greenwich. This would, therefore, seem to be clearly defined; but it has been found necessary to fix more accurately this portion of the international boundary by means of astronomical observations, which are precluded, by the high altitude, for more than six months in the year. During the spring summer, and autumn the continuous twilight (at midsummer almost daylight) renders the necessary number of stars requisite for observation invisible. Were telegraphic communication established with the south and east, this portion of the meridian could be laid down with a probable error of, say, eight or ten feet; but with the only means at present available

the result of a season's observations by two of the most experienced observers may differ many hundred yards.[1] Unfavourable meteorological conditions are also a serious obstacle to the work in hand.

The first attempt at defining the Alaskan boundary was made by Lieutenant Schwatka, of the United States army, who, in 1883, made a rough and necessarily crude survey of the Lewes and Pelly-Yukon rivers from their head to Fort Yukon, situated at the mouth of the Porcupine river, a distance of about five hundred miles. Lieutenant Schwatka determined the position of the boundary from this survey, and located it at the mouth of what is now known as Mission Creek, naming a high rock bluff at this point Boundary Butte. But in consequence of numerous representations to the Canadian Government, and British demands for claims in the gold-fields of the Yukon Basin, it was determined to send in a joint Geographical and Geological Survey to examine thoroughly that portion of the

[1] There can be no doubt as to the position of the Klondike gold-fields, which are 55 miles *at least* from the American frontier.

Yukon region lying in British territory. For this purpose Dr. G. M. Dawson, Director of the Geological Survey of Canada, was deputed to make the Geological, and Mr. William O'Gilvie the Geographical Survey. Dr. Dawson's operations were confined to the Pelly and Lewes rivers, but Mr. O'Gilvie carefully examined the entire country from Pyramid Island and Chilkat Inlet (at the head of Lynn Canal) to the head of Dyea Inlet, thence over the Chilkoot Pass, and down the lakes and rapids of the Lewes and Yukon rivers, to the vicinity of the 141st meridian. Mr. O'Gilvie arrived here on September 14, 1887. Winter quarters were erected and an astronomical observatory built. The result of Mr. O'Gilvie's astronomical observations was recorded some fifteen miles higher up the Yukon river, and nine miles farther east, than Lieutenant Schwatka's determination, which latter, however, is not, from the nature of the survey, entitled to much consideration.

In 1889 the United States Government decided to verify Mr. O'Gilvie's determinations, and despatched two members of the Coast

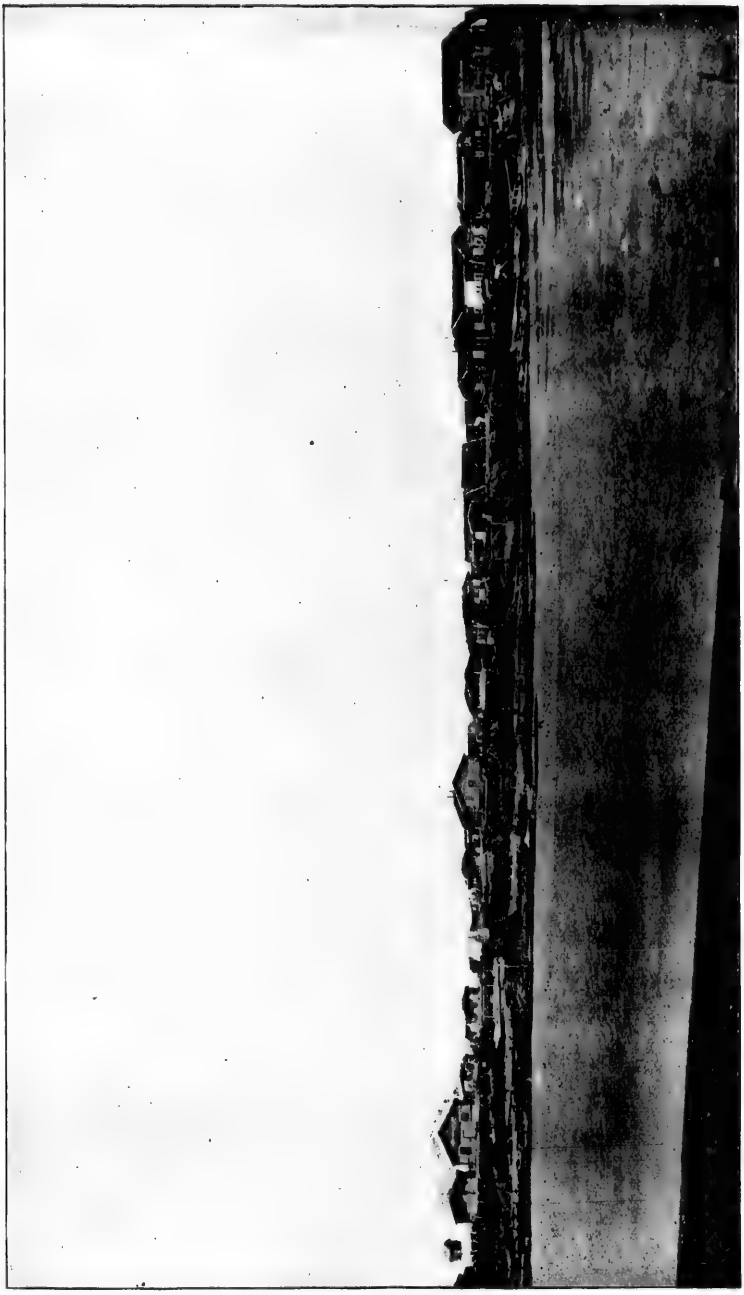
Survey Staff, Messrs. Magrath and Turner, to Alaska to determine by astronomical observations the position of the 141st meridian on the Yukon and Porcupine rivers. The result of these observations was at first in favour of Canada as against Mr. O'Gilvie's determination, and located the boundary considerably farther *west* than the latter gentleman had done. Lately, however, a revision of Mr. Magrath's computations locates the disputed line at a point far *east* of Mr. O'Gilvie, which circumstance has largely contributed to the present difficulty. The matter still remains in abeyance, chiefly owing to the dilatoriness of the United States Government, which does not appear at all anxious to come to a settlement on this vexed question.

On the dull drizzly morning of July 16 we reach Circle City (in American territory), which, wrapped in a mantle of grey mist, presents a truly dismal and depressing appearance. The 'Alice' is made fast to a mudbank, opposite the store of one Jack McQuesten, well known as the 'Father of the Yukon.' A corrugated iron shed

close to the landing-place is the property of this gentleman, and is looked upon with much curiosity, for it is the only one on the river.

Circle City derives its name from its proximity to the Arctic Circle, and was founded in 1894, shortly after gold had been discovered by some half-breed Indians in its vicinity. The 'find' attracted the usual rush of white men, and in 1896 the settlement contained over 1,200 inhabitants. About four hundred log buildings line the wide straggling thoroughfares. The prevailing style of architecture resembles that of Forty-Mile City, but the streets are laid out with greater regularity, and there are fewer tree-stumps and morasses than in the English settlement up-river.

Circle City is now practically deserted, although, at the time of our visit, it was a busy thriving place; for many of the creeks around are rich, and would under other circumstances never have been abandoned. But 'Klondicitis' (as the Alaskan gold fever has been facetiously named) raged so violently at Circle City some months ago that men who were comfortably turning out



CIRCLE CITY, ALASKA—A GOLD-MINING CAMP WITHIN THE ARCTIC CIRCLE

their 200*l.* and 300*l.* a month deserted their claims without a moment's hesitation, and have probably, ere now, regretted their rashness. The most important diggings near here are situated on Birch Creek; but Mastodon and Eagle Creeks have also turned out a large amount of gold. Several gold claims have also been partly worked on Boulder, Deadwood, and Harrison Creeks. These are now all lying idle, but will probably be in full swing again before the end of 1898.

A curious fact in connection with the unusual mining conditions at Klondike was brought to my notice while at Circle City. An old miner there (who had been in Alaska eight or ten years) told a friend of mine that hitherto experienced miners about Circle City had sunk their shafts, and followed what was supposed to be an infallible rule in placer mining—viz. that when they struck the clay they abandoned their claims, considering them to be valueless. Since then, he added, ignorant 'tender-feet' had gone into the Klondike, and, not knowing when to stop digging, dug right through the clay, and

had thus come upon the richest strikes. The old fellow and his mates had thereupon returned to their old diggings near Circle City, to work through the clay, in the hopes of finding the same conditions as at Klondike.[1]

Circle City has been called by enthusiastic 'Yukoners' the 'Paris of Alaska,' but I failed to trace the slightest resemblance to the beautiful French city as I wandered disconsolately about on the morning of our arrival, splashing about in the rain among the motley collection of sodden dwellings and dripping roofs. There was certainly more gaiety, or life, of a tawdry, disreputable description than at Forty-Mile, for every tenth house was either a gambling or drinking saloon, or a den of an even worse description. There are (or were) two theatres, and a (so-called) Music Hall. One of the theatrical

[1] This circumstance is explained by the fact that at Klondike there has been found what is called a false bedrock. It would appear that, in the glacial action, the gold was deposited on true bedrock, and subsequently, by either volcanic action or extraordinary glacial action, what appeared to be another bedrock was deposited on top of this gold deposit, and parties who have gone through this false bedrock have found rich pay-streaks between it and true bedrock (O'Gilvie's Report, 1897.)

companies which visited the place last winter was composed of six young women and five men, of whom all the women had managed to struggle over the Chilkoot Pass, and down the lakes and rapids to their destination. But, although legitimate drama of the blood-curdling type found many admirers, the dancing-saloons were infinitely more popular. A ball is given nightly at one or other of these establishments, and half a dozen if a fortunate miner returns with plenty of 'dust.' I attended one of these entertainments in a long low apartment, festooned with American, German, and Swedish flags (the Union Jack was conspicuous by its absence), with a drinking-bar at one end. The orchestra consisted of a violin and guitar—almost drowned by a noisy crowd at the bar, where a wrangle took place, on an average, every five minutes. It was past midnight, but the Arctic twilight still revealed a number of mud-stained men and painted women, slowly circling round to the strains of the 'Donau-Wellen,' execrably played; $1 is charged by the saloon-keeper for the privilege of one dance with a lady, who

receives twenty-five cents as her share in the transaction. The guests numbered about sixty, and quite a third that number of dogs had strayed in through the open doorway from the street. The dogs appeared to excite no surprise until the master of the ceremonies (in shirt sleeves) proceeded to walk round and sprinkle the boards with powdered resin; the dancers then gave way to their delight with shrieks of laughter and the shrillest cat-calls, for a hungry cur was closely following him, and greedily devouring every atom as it fell.

It is said that, even in its palmiest days, Circle City contained more dogs than people, and this I can readily believe, for one could scarcely walk along the streets without stumbling over one at every step. The Yukon dog is a terrible thief, and will carry off anything, from a piece of bacon to a pair of boots. Everything of an edible nature in a settlement is therefore 'cached' in small sheds, built on poles eight or ten feet high, and entered by a movable ladder. A good sleigh dog in Alaska costs from $75 to $200, and sometimes more. Nearly all the dogs

CIRCLE CITY, ALASKA
(Photograph taken at 11:30 P.M. by Midnight Sun)

from Circle City and Forty-Mile are now at Klondike, and many will probably be used for food there during the coming winter.

Notwithstanding the rowdy element, crime is rare in Circle City. There is no police, as on the Canadian side, and practically no government. The place is ruled by miner's law, represented by a society called the 'Yukon Pioneers.' Everything, from a mining dispute to a broken head, is settled by this tribunal. There is no appeal, the law being carried out if necessary by physical force, and, strange to say, this rough and ready mode of administering justice has so far been found satisfactory. There are no regular banks at Circle City. Gold dust at $17 an ounce is legal tender, and deposited, as a rule, with Jack McQuesten, in whose safe there are frequently 20,000*l.* worth of nuggets and dust. Jack's honesty and integrity are well known from Dyea to St. Michael, and no receipt is asked for or, indeed, needed. For the big-hearted Irishman has too often assisted the poor and needy miner with funds from his own store not to be far above suspicion. But robbery of

any kind is a rarity in Alaska, where the gold-seekers are more like members of one large family than anything else—a family which contains but few black sheep, judging by the hearty and affectionate welcome which Father Barnum received from one and all upon his reappearance at the mining stations *en route*. On these occasions the familiar red jersey was discarded for garments of a sable hue, and the clerical garb was donned with such celerity that a facetious passenger one day suggested that the wearer had mistaken his vocation, and should have been a 'quick change' artist. 'Profit by my example, Joe,' was the bland rejoinder. 'Cleanliness is next to godliness, as I have always told you, and I am quite sure you have not had that old "Jumper" off for the last three years!' The shaft hit the mark, for Joe's aversion to water (in any shape) was a byword on the Yukon. But few ever 'took on' our good priest at repartee and went unscathed away.

Shortly after leaving Circle City the Yukon widens into a kind of huge lake, perhaps eighty to a hundred miles in circumference, covered

with islands, which render navigation both tedious and difficult. Fort Yukon (within the Arctic circle) is the next station of any importance, and the most northerly point on the river, which now trends away to the south-west. Fort Yukon is an abandoned trading-post of the Hudson Bay Company, and was once, owing to its position near the mouth of the Porcupine river, a place of considerable importance. It is now deserted but for one white man, who occupies a rough wooden shanty, and carries on a trade in furs and fish with the Indians north and south of his station. Ten or twelve tents near the landing-place were occupied by Indians from the Porcupine and its tributaries, who contrasted favourably both in size and appearance with their brethren of the Yukon.

A short distance below this point the steamer 'Arctic,' on her way up-river, passed the 'Alice,' and following a practice borrowed from whalers, and known as 'gamming,' both vessels moored alongside each other for an hour to exchange news. I was surprised to see many of

the miners who had left Circle City but twenty-four hours ago suddenly shake hands with their comrades, shoulder their belongings, and embark on the up-river boat, some of the Forty-Mile passengers following their example. I learnt that this is a common occurrence on the Yukon, and it only serves to show the feverish restless habits engendered by the search for gold in even the most practical men. 'Old Pete,' an old-timer, who left us with the rest to go back to his claim, had already made three ineffectual attempts to leave the country. Several tributaries join the Yukon between the Porcupine river and the settlement of Nulato (which was reached on July 18), but with the exception of the Tananá and Koyukuk[1] rivers, none of any great importance. Nulato is a fair-sized village, which bears the unenviable notoriety of having been the scene of many tragedies connected with white settlers. Among others, Lieutenant Barnard[2] was murdered here by Indians in 1851;

[1] The Koyukuk river, which enters the Yukon near Nulato, was prospected in 1893-94, and indications of good placers found.

[2] See Appendix E.

Mrs. Beane, wife of an employé in the Alaska Commercial Company, was shot by natives in 1879; while, at a spot not far distant, Archbishop Seghers, of the Catholic Church, was treacherously murdered by his white servant in 1886. Nulato is also famed for the size and virulence of its mosquitoes; but, although it is an established fact that nine dogs were actually killed by these pests during the month preceding our arrival, we did not suffer so much here as at many places up-river.

There are no places of interest on the Lower Yukon, although, owing to the fur trade, settlements become more numerous as we near the sea. The pleasantest memory that I retain of the dreary journey from Circle City to St. Michael is the Catholic mission of the Holy Cross at Koserefski, which is prettily situated in a grassy valley formed by low, undulating hills. The 'Alice' remained here for a few hours, which enabled me to visit the mission. The latter consists of several neat wooden buildings, comprising dwelling-houses for the sisters, a priest's house, a pretty chapel, a school for the

native children, and a vegetable garden, where potatoes and cabbages had been grown with doubtful success. Here too was the first and last flower-garden that we came across in Alaska. It was pathetic to see the care that had been lavished on the flowers—poor things at best—but which infused a touch of warmth and colour even into this lonely waste. One of the sisters pointed with pride to some mignonette that during the first few days of the brief summer had been carefully taken indoors every night, and as carefully replanted every morning, for fear of the frost! At one end of the garden was a statue of Our Lady, enshrined in a tiny chapel of pine boughs, while a large white cross near the mission marked the resting-place of a poor sister who had died just before our arrival. The climate of Koserefski is very trying, and many deaths have already occurred here, although the mission was only founded some ten years ago. Before leaving we visited the schools, models of neat cleanliness, where twenty or thirty children of both sexes were at work. French is the language spoken, and it seemed

strange to hear the crisp clean accent again in this out-of-the-way corner of creation. But the whole place wore an air of peace and homeliness so different to the squalid settlements up-river that one might almost have imagined oneself in some quiet village in far-away France.

Father Barnum, our good friend and companion during many weary days of travel, left us at Koserefski, and it was with sincere regret that we bade him farewell. Few human beings are endowed with the courage, geniality, and supreme unselfishness that characterised one whom I shall always be proud to remember as a fellow-traveller, and whose acquaintance I sincerely hope some day to renew in more civilised regions.

A new world awaits us a few hours below Koserefski. Trees are no longer visible. Vast plains of grey 'tundra' roll away to the horizon on every side, and the monotony, as the steamer churns her way through the muddy stream, becomes wearisome in the extreme. The unsavoury Indian and his birch-bark canoe are now things of the past. We have reached the land of the queer-looking fur-clad Eskimo, who

darts alongside in his tiny skin 'kyak,' with a smile on his honest brown features, a contrast to the sullen, vicious faces we have left behind us. Nor is this the only sign that the Alaskan part of our journey is drawing to an end, for a sharp bite in the air towards evening warns us that we are rapidly nearing Bering Sea and the confines of the Great Frozen Ocean.

On July 20 we reach the Aphoon, one of the many mouths of the Yukon, and anchor off Kutlik, a tiny settlement in the midst of an Arctic desert, composed, in summer, of soaking impassable prairie, in winter, of an unbroken plain of ice and snow stretching drearily away to the Arctic Ocean. From here a sea journey of sixty odd hours separates us from our destination, a passage which strong and frequent gales and a heavy sea occasionally render very unpleasant, if not dangerous, in a flat-bottomed river boat. But fortune favours us. The treacherous waters of Bering Sea are, for a wonder, smooth and sunlit, and at midday, on July 21, we anchor off Fort St. Michael, the journey here from New York having occupied exactly fifty-six days.

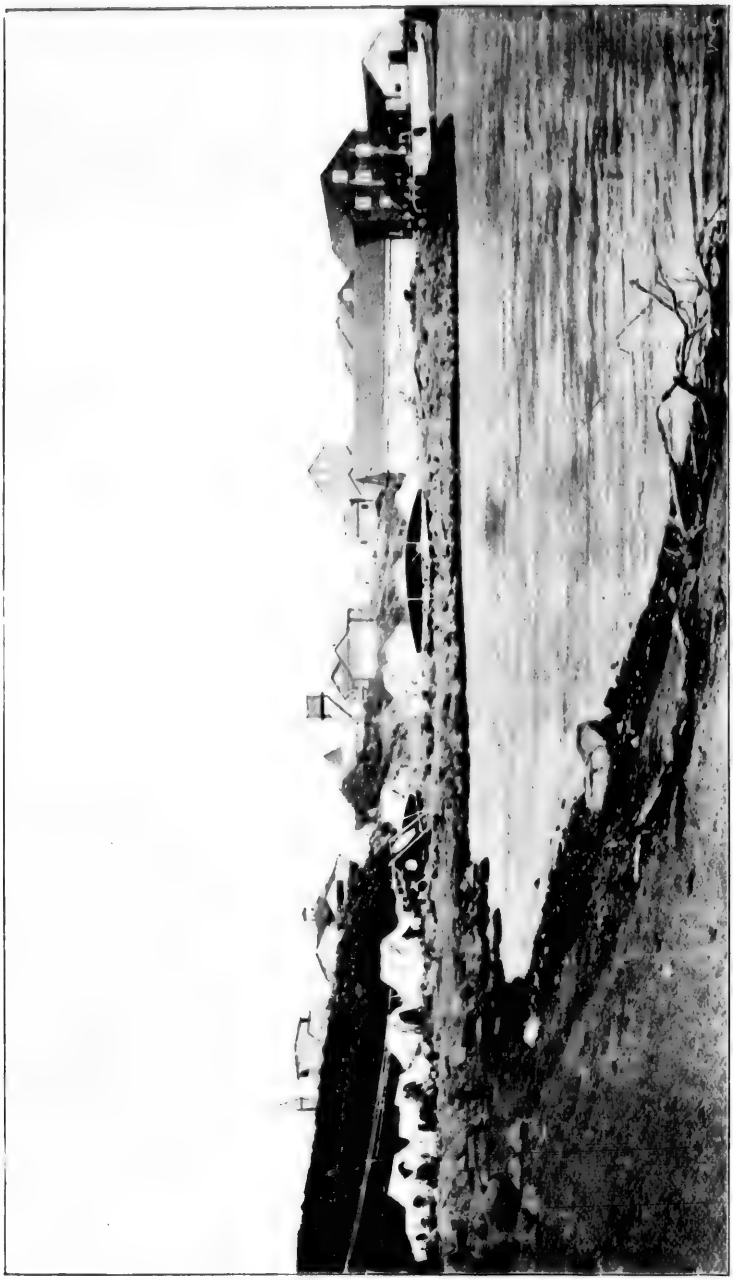
CHAPTER VIII

AMONG THE ESKIMO—THE 'BEAR'—KING'S ISLAND

WERE I condemned to live in Alaska (which Heaven forbid!) I should certainly select St. Michael as a place of residence; for, although the inhabitants are practically prisoners during nine months of the year, it is a bright clean little place, a contrast to the dirty slipshod towns of the interior. First and foremost, there are few mosquitoes, which is in itself an incalculable blessing. Moreover, the cold, which inland sometimes registers 80° (Fahr.) below zero, seldom falls here below 55° below zero (see Appendix F); and, although rain and fog are prevalent in autumn, and mid-winter brings down terrific blizzards from the north, the short wintry days are generally bright, still, and pleasant. Plenty of sport is obtainable on the mainland. Caribou, wild-geese, duck, and

ptarmigan abound; but, although salmon are numerous, they will not rise to a fly. The agent of this branch of the Alaska Commercial Company (who controls a district rather larger in area than Germany) has known them to scale as high as 100 lbs.

Fort St. Michael, which has, under American rule, become a place of considerable importance, is separated from the mainland of Alaska by a narrow strait four or five miles broad. The island is composed of 'tundra'; a swampy plain like those beyond the tree-limit in Siberia, impassable in summer, but admirably adapted for sleighing purposes. The settlement consists chiefly of warehouses and dwellings erected by the Alaska Commercial Company, which form one long street, neatly paved with wood, and kept scrupulously clean in wet or dusty weather. There is also a large barn-like building dignified by the name of 'Hotel,' for the use of miners and others entering or leaving the country, who frequently have to wait here several days (if not weeks) for an ocean or river steamer. Natives are forbidden to reside in the settlement; but



FORT ST. MICHAEL, BERING SEA, ALASKA

the low green hills around are dotted with the white tents of the Eskimo, who, during the summer, travel here with furs from great distances. A neat green-roofed church, an old bastion, and some rusty cannon are the sole remaining relics of the time when grey-coated Cossacks garrisoned the island, and rifles were more plentiful than the almighty dollar. A Russian priest also resides here; for the Greek Church has still many missions throughout the country, largely subsidised by the Russian Government.[1]

I have generally found in my wanderings that, whether an Englishman be roasting on the sands of an African desert or freezing on the floes of the Arctic, he generally manages to make his immediate surroundings as comfortable (if not as luxurious) as circumstances will permit. I have starved with a French regiment three miles from a railway in Algeria, and eaten ice cream with a Scotch planter in the wilds of Borneo; but I was scarcely prepared for the

[1] The 'Redoute St. Michael,' as it was formerly called, was founded by Lieut. Tebenkoff, of the Russian service, in 1835.

reception awaiting me at the house of my fellow-countryman, Mr. Wilson, of the Alaska Commercial Company, and his charming wife, who had surrounded themselves with all the refinement and comforts of an English home. I was resigned to a more or less lengthened sojourn at the barn-like building aforementioned, but was rescued by Mr. Wilson, who carried me off to his cosy dwelling, with a hearty invitation to 'stop as long as I liked, and the longer the better.' So I was soon installed in a pretty bedroom with chintz curtains under the agent's hospitable roof, wondering whether this were not all a dream, from which I should presently awake on the wrong side of the Grand Cañon, or in my grimy cabin on board the 'Alice.' For it seemed all too good to be true. A warm bath was, in itself, an undreamt-of luxury, the excellent dinner that followed it a revelation in this northern wilderness. These, and the cigars and whisky-and-soda that preceded a 'Nirvana' of pillows and clean sheets, remain to this day engraven on my memory, undimmed by subsequent miseries on the western shores of

Bering Straits, that might well have effaced a less pleasurable reminiscence.

Notwithstanding its cheerful surroundings, a gloomy interest is attached to St. Michael from the fact that it is the last port generally visited by Arctic expeditions before entering the frozen region that enshrines the world's great mystery. It was from here that the ill-fated 'Jeannette' set out in August 1879 on a voyage destined to furnish a record of suffering unparalleled even in Arctic annals.[1] Two years later the U.S. 'Rodgers' called here for the last time on her way north, to be afterwards totally destroyed by fire in St. Lawrence Bay, Siberia. I also retain unpleasant memories, from a travelling point of view, of St. Michael; for it was here that my projected ice-journey across Bering Straits received its final *coup de grâce*.

My original intention upon leaving New York was to proceed to St. Michael, remain there until winter set in, and then travel on by

[1] 'This is a miserable place,' wrote poor De Long in his journal of St. Michael. 'Desolate and cheerless as the place is, we may yet look back upon it as a kind of earthly paradise.' The words were indeed prophetic!

dog-sleigh to Cape Prince of Wales, on the American shores of Bering Straits. There is a reindeer station near here (established a few years ago by the United States Government), where I proposed to procure natives, dogs, and sledges, and await a favourable moment for crossing to the neighbourhood of East Cape, in Asia, a distance of about forty miles, over the ice. It was by no means certain, however, that the latter extended the entire distance from shore to shore. I had ransacked the library of the Royal Geographical Society in vain for information on this important point, to say nothing of perhaps a score of works by Russian and Swedish Arctic explorers, but with no result. Even experienced whaling men in San Francisco differed as to the possibility of the sleigh journey across Bering Straits. As a matter of fact, however, few of them had ever seen the latter between the months of November and July, when the whaling ships are either wintering far away in the ice off Herschel Island, summering in southern seas, or snugly reposing on the mud inside the Golden Gate. For the

same reason the Eskimo around St. Michael could tell me nothing; for, although many of them were in the habit of trading up and down the Straits in skin boats during the open season, they knew no more about the condition of the ice than a Margate excursionist.

Fortunately, however, shortly after my arrival a party of Siberian natives landed here from East Cape, the most easterly point of Asia, about 250 miles distant, in a 'baidarà'[1] laden with furs, deer-skins, and other trading goods. They encamped just outside the settlement, and I immediately visited them, accompanied by a Russian half-breed as interpreter, to gain, if possible, some information whereon to form plans for the future. I was then unacquainted with the amiable qualities of the Tchuktchi, but was at once struck with their sullen, ill-favoured appearance and manners. The crew numbered about twenty, of whom perhaps a third were women and children. It was difficult, at first, to overcome the shyness and suspicion aroused by our appearance, and the nervousness engen-

[1] A skin boat.

dered by the crowd of Eskimo around; for a Tchuktchi away from his own home and people becomes as timid as a child. Trading, too, was their object, and they would not discuss other subjects until I produced a tin of English tobacco. Tongues then wagged more freely, and the spokesman, a sulky beetlebrowed giant, even relaxed into a grim smile when he heard of my intention, which was retailed, evidently as an excellent joke, to his companions. The Straits, we were assured, are never crossed except when a man has been carried away by accident on a floe from the 'foot-ice.'[1] On these occasions only both Eskimo and Tchuktchi had occasionally been swept away and landed on the opposite coast, but this was a very rare occurrence. The majority perished, for the simple reason that Bering Straits are never, even during the severest winter, entirely frozen over from shore to shore. An ice-jam of a few hours may, and does, occur at intervals; but there is a channel halfway across, where huge ice-floes are continually on the move, crushing and grinding

[1] Ice securely fastened to the coast.

their way into and out of the Polar Sea. This channel is (so far as we could roughly ascertain by measuring on a paddle) about ten miles broad, or a quarter of the distance over. The Tchuktchi added that a sleigh journey is sometimes made to the American coast by natives of the Diomede Islands, about fifteen miles distant from Cape Prince of Wales, but even this was only attempted in cases of extreme urgency, such as starvation, &c. Our informant, however, and the whole boat's crew, emphatically denied the possibility of a winter journey from America to Asia, across Bering Straits.[1]

It was a terrible disappointment, but one cannot achieve impossibilities. There was, therefore, nothing to be done but to await the arrival of the U.S. Revenue cutter 'Bear,' which, through the kindly mediation of Sir Julian Pauncefote, the British Ambassador at Washington, had been placed at my disposal by the American authorities in the event of a difficulty of this kind. The 'Bear' was patrolling the Arctic, and did

[1] Bering Straits have an average depth of twenty-six fathoms, and are closed by ice-floes from the middle or end of October till the first or second week in June—sometimes later.

not turn up for five weeks, which gave me plenty of time and opportunity for studying (under exceptionally comfortable circumstances) the habits and customs of that strange being the Alaskan Eskimo.

The Alaskan Eskimo have been estimated by the Russian explorer Ivan Petroff [1] to number about 18,000. They inhabit the whole coast-line of Alaska west of the 141st meridian, with the exception of the northern part of Cook's Inlet, that portion of Alaska west of the 157th meridian, and the Shumagin and Aleutian group of islands. It is curious that, although only forty miles apart, the American and Asiatic shores of Bering Straits should be peopled by tribes so utterly dissimilar in disposition, customs, and language. The Siberian Tchuktchi is engrained with every vice compatible with his isolated position. The Alaskan Eskimo are honest, good-tempered, and invariably friendly towards strangers. And yet, notwithstanding their widely different natures, the Eskimo

[1] A special agent deputed by the United States Government to report upon the population, industries, and resources of Alaska.

resembles the Tchuktchi in his habits. Both subsist almost entirely upon fish, and are equally repulsive in their daily life. Physically speaking, however, the Tchuktchi is superior to his neighbour. The average height of an Eskimo is about 5 feet 6 inches; that of a Tchuktchi, at least two inches more. Neither race, however, are devoid of courage, and at sea, in the most tempestuous weather, they know no fear.

The Eskimo woman ages rapidly, but when young is not repellent, and sometimes even good-looking. They dress, like the men, in the 'parka' (a long loose garment reaching to the knee, made of musk-rat or reindeer's skin) and fur-seal boots and breeches. It was puzzling at first to distinguish the sexes, for the Eskimo are a smooth-faced race; but the fair sex are generally adorned with small tattoo marks upon the chin. An Eskimo woman is treated more or less as a beast of burthen, as among the Tchuktchis, but is taken better care of in Alaska than among the Siberian natives.

The winter dwellings of the Eskimo are simply pits in the ground roofed over with

logs, with a piece of fish-skin or walrus entrail for a window.[1] The hut is entered by a kind of antechamber, on the top of which is a hole just large enough to admit the body of a man. A step-ladder is descended to a narrow passage or tunnel which leads to the principal room, fifteen or twenty feet away. The sole furniture of an Eskimo residence is a seal-oil lamp for cooking and heating purposes, which is lit in the autumn and burns incessantly until the following spring. The hut is generally about six to eight feet high and thirty or forty feet in circumference. It is sometimes occupied by ten or fifteen persons, and during stormy weather, when every aperture is closed, the stench and vitiated air become almost unbearable. The summer dwellings were formerly constructed aboveground, of light poles roofed over with skins; but these have been almost entirely superseded by tents of American drill, which are cheaper, and to a stranger infinitely preferable to the old-fashioned huts.

[1] A hut I saw near St. Michael was covered with bear, walrus, and dog skulls, but this was a rarity.

Every Eskimo settlement has its 'kashga,' a kind of council house, usually of much larger dimensions than the surrounding huts. The kashga is also used as a kind of club or residence for the youths and unmarried men of the village. Guests from a distance are always lodged, and matters of public importance discussed, in this establishment, which sometimes measures sixty or seventy feet square and twenty to thirty feet high. According to the explorer Elliott, the 'kashga is the theatre for the absurd masked dances and mummery of the festivals, and above all is the spot chosen for that vile ammoniacal bath of the Eskimo, the most popular of all their recreations.'

I was not privileged to witness the bathing process, which is thus graphically described by an eyewitness :—

'At some time in the afternoon the fire is drawn from the hot stones on the hearth, and the water and a kantag of chamber-lye poured over them, which, arising in dense clouds of vapour, gives notice (by its presence and its horrible ammoniacal odour) to the delighted

inmates that the bath is on. The "kashga" is heated to suffocation, it is full of smoke, and the outside men run in from their huts, with wisps of dry grass for towels, and bunches of alder-twigs to flog their naked bodies. They throw off their garments; they shout and dance and whip themselves into profuse perspiration as they caper in the hot vapour. More of their disgusting substitute for soap is rubbed on, and produces a lather, which they rince off with cold water; and, to cap the full enjoyment of this Satanic bath, these naked actors rush out and roll in a snow-bank or plunge into the icy flood of some lake or river adjoining, as the season warrants. This is the most enjoyable occasion of an Eskimo's existence, so he solemnly affirms. Nothing else affords him a tithe of the infinite pleasure which this orgie gives him. To us, however, there is nothing so offensive about [illegible] that stench which such a performance [illegible]uses.'[1]

The daily fare of these people is not enticing. The staple food is boiled seal-meat, and in

[1] *An Arctic Province*, by Henry Elliott.

summer-time the salmon and other fish that abound in the rivers and on the sea-coast. But the Eskimo is a gourmet in his way, and there are certain dishes invariably placed before an honoured guest with ostentation. A very favourite one is the 'triplicherat,' made during the warm season. A hole is dug and filled with raw salmon-heads. After ten days' exposure to the sun the upper layer of heads is (for obvious reasons) in a state of constant motion. A portion of the putrid mass is then heaped upon a wooden platter and greedily devoured. Rotten goose eggs, and the 'kamamok,' a kind of mayonnaise of stale fish-roe mashed up with salmon-berries and flavoured with seal oil, are also favourite delicacies, which, though they may not sound appetising to the reader, are as carefully prepared and appreciated in this Arctic wilderness as the most delicate *plats* in London, at the Savoy or Berkeley Restaurants.

The Eskimo are expert and daring fishermen. The tiny 'kyak' is used in smooth water and the larger 'baidarà' on long sea journeys. The former is merely a seal-skin canoe, with

circular hatches for one to three men; but the 'baidarà' is of walrus-hide, about forty feet long, and carries from twenty to thirty persons. 'baidaràs' will live in a heavy sea, but are rather trying to the nervous novice, in constant dread of breaking through the flimsy fabric. The water beneath is plainly visible; but the natives walk boldly about, and depress the skin a couple of inches with unconcern, being well aware that the spot they stand on would probably sustain a ton or more. The Eskimo are also skilful hunters, and thousands of skins are stored in the Alaska Commercial Company's warehouses, which at the time of our visit contained enough material to stock one side of Bond Street.[1]

Tobacco is smoked and chewed indiscriminately by both sexes and all ages. The Eskimo failing for alcohol is proverbial, but fortunately seldom indulged in; for an Eskimo becomes, like the Tchuktchi, a mad, ungovernable beast under the influence of drink. Most of the vile whisky illegally traded by whalers goes to

[1] See Appendix G.

the Siberian coast, where there is less risk in landing it, and the Eskimo has to fall back upon tobacco as his only solace. There is no waste, for the supply is extremely limited. A plug is sucked at for days, until every particle of flavour has vanished. It is then carefully dried, and eventually smoked in a tiny brass or stone pipe that holds barely a thimbleful.

The days slip quickly away at St. Michael's, for the weather is bright and pleasant, and time seldom hangs heavy on one's hands. Millions of geese, duck, and waterfowl are to be found within easy distance of the place, and capital sport is to be had by walking a mile or so. Enjoyment, however, is somewhat marred by the mosquitoes, which, although they seldom visit the settlement, swarm in the 'tundra,' and one hundred yards across the latter, on account of its swampy nature, about equals a mile over ordinary ground. A young English missionary, temporarily located here, and an ardent shot (though somewhat unversed in sporting vernacular), opines that the 'bands'[1] of grouse (ptarmi-

[1] Presumably 'coveys.'

gan) amply compensate for the labour involved in reaching them; but I do not quite share his opinion. Still, there is plenty to do in fine weather, strolling about the busy, bustling settlement, or inspecting the Eskimo encampment, while a goodly collection of books and the latest papers render even rainy days in the agent's quarters anything but dull. On still, fine evenings I generally stroll down after dinner to the wharf, to watch the Eskimo fish for rock-cod, which they pull out with a line, at the rate of about twenty to the minute. A solitary sailing vessel is generally anchored in the bay, and I sometimes embark in a 'kayak' to pay her a visit, sure of a welcome from the lonely skipper impatiently awaiting sailing orders, which, however, will generally not long be delayed. For by the end o September most of the shipping has cleared for the south. A stray whaler may look in on her way down from the Arctic, but the last days of November will convert the blue waters of Norton Sound into an icy waste, stretching its dreary length far away, almost to the shores of Asia. Music or a game at cards

often winds up the day; for our party before my departure is increased by the arrival of Messrs. Sloss and Neumann, of the Alaska Commercial Company—a couple of thorough Bohemians, notwithstanding their mercantile calling, and as familiar with brighter Paris as the darkest regions of the great mysterious land they have explored and exploited so well. So there is no lack of conversation on the most varied topics, and the former is frequently carried on till the small hours, much to the detriment of our good host's cellar and cigar-box!

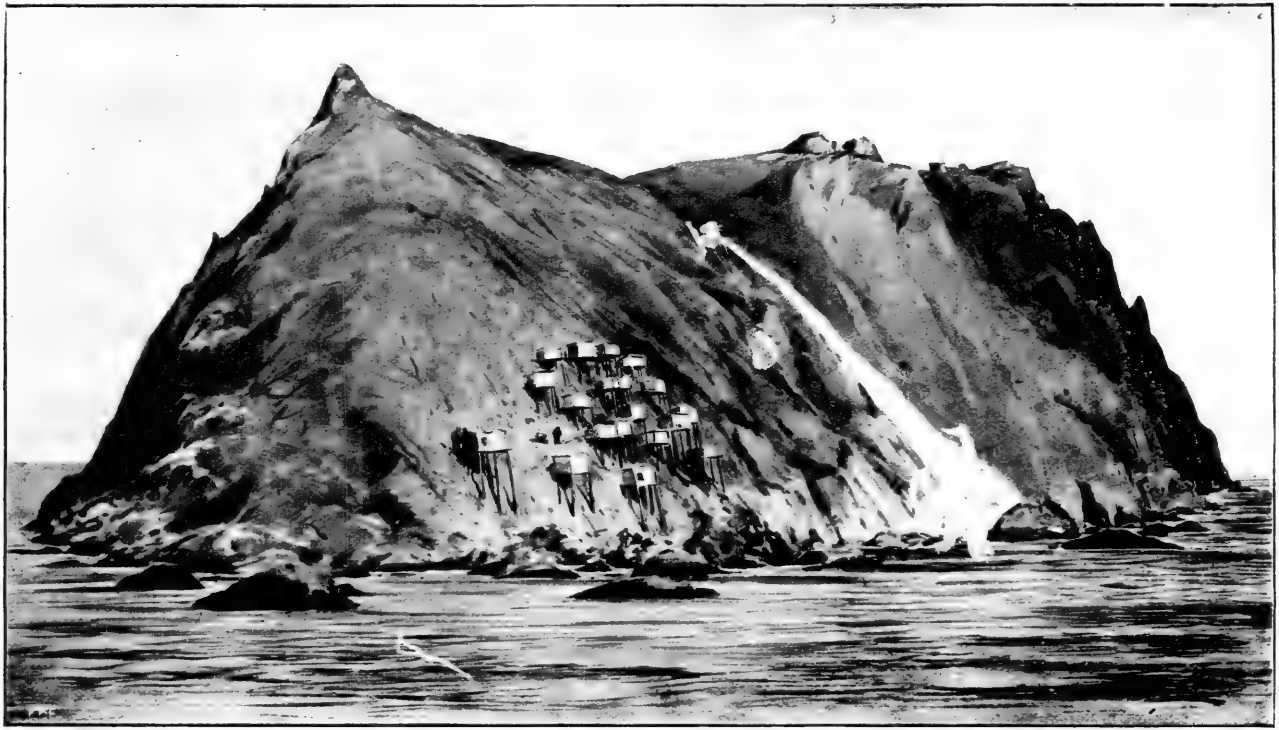
The Revenue cutter 'Bear' did not arrive off St. Michael until the morning of September 4, when I at once boarded her, and obtained the permission of Captain Tuttle, her genial commander, to cross on her to the Siberian coast. The word 'cutter' is somewhat a misnomer (if literally taken) for the Government vessels that patrol these northern waters. The 'Bear,' for instance, is a three-masted screw-steamer of over six hundred tons. She was built in Dundee, and originally intended for whaling purposes, but was purchased by the United States Govern-

ment for the Greely expedition. The 'Bear' is said to be the best and strongest ship in the Revenue cutter service for Arctic work, and has certainly rendered more services, and saved more lives, than any other three ships in the fleet.[1]

Time was precious, for heavy ice was already reported as far south as Cape Prince of Wales. A few hours, however, sufficed to embark our stores and a few bulky packages containing articles of barter for the Siberian natives of the far north, amongst whom money is unknown. At nine o'clock on the evening of September 4 we weighed anchor, having taken leave of our kind hosts, and put to sea, a parting salute from the rusty old Russian guns at the agency heralding our departure for the unknown.

Bering Sea is noted for its intricate navigation and violent storms, and on this occasion did not

[1] The 'Bear' was despatched from Seattle, U.S.A., to the rescue of the imprisoned whalers in November 1897 (*see* Appendix I). The intention is to get as far north as the ice will permit, and sleigh on with provisions to the ice-bound ships. The journey (at this season of the year) is one fraught with the greatest peril, and the return of the stout little ship and her gallant crew is anxiously awaited throughout the United States.



KING'S ISLAND, BERING SEA

belie its character. Although a blue sky and light breezes favoured us during the first day, the next morning found us hove to in a mountainous sea. Towards sundown, however, the weather moderated, and enabled us to proceed to our first destination, King's Island, one of the most curious and interesting places it has ever fallen to my lot to visit.

King's Island is simply a mass of rock about a mile long and nearly six hundred feet high. On approaching it are noticed what at first appear to be a number of swallows' nests, stuck like limpets to the sheer face of the cliff. These are the summer huts of the King's Islanders—walrus-hide dwellings lashed to the side of the cliff; for the terrible tempests that sweep over this barren rock would make short work of any hut on its summit. These natives subsist entirely on walrus, for there is not a blade of grass or spoonful of soil in the place. In 1890 the 'Bear' found the 300 inhabitants reduced to a third of that number by starvation. Walrus had been scarce, and for eight months in the year communication with the mainland (more than forty

miles distant) is entirely cut off by the ice. The survivors had eaten all their dogs, and had been living for several months on seaweed. Had the 'Bear' not rescued them, all must have perished before the following summer.

We anchored about three hundred yards off shore, but a heavy swell did not prevent several of the islanders, both men and women, from paying us a visit. They were a merry, pleasant-looking lot of fellows, allied to the Alaskan Eskimo in language and appearance. Many of the men wore labrets, or pieces of stone or ivory, thrust into the lower lip, which gave them a sinister look that belied their kindly, hospitable nature, and all the married women carried their latest born slung round their necks by a piece of walrus thong. The King's Islanders are skilful at carving, and several of our visitors had brought walrus tusks most beautifully fashioned, to exchange for tobacco and, if possible, whisky; but the latter is a luxury sternly denied them on board the 'Bear.'

Captain Tuttle originally intended to land us at East Cape, Siberia. There is a Tchuktchi

TCHUKTCHIS, EAST CAPE, BERING STRAITS

settlement there, whence we might reasonably have hoped to reach the Siberian settlement of Nijni-Kolymsk—a two months' journey by dog-sleigh, according to Colonel Gilder, the American traveller, who accomplished it a few years ago. From Nijni-Kolymsk all would have been fairly plain sailing (under the circumstances) to St. Petersburg. But East Cape was, it now appeared, completely blocked by ice and unapproachable. So there was nothing for it but to make for a harbour about a hundred miles farther south—known to whalers as Indian Point. This place is marked Cape Tchaplin on most maps; Cape Tchukotskoi on others; but its native name is Oumwaidjik, and the natives know no other. Here we were landed on September 8, 1896, when the snowy landscape and severe cold were more suggestive of mid-winter than early autumn. We said good-bye to our kind American shipmates with genuine regret, and not without some apprehension. For when the trim white ship finally disappeared beneath the horizon, we felt indeed that our last link with civilisation was severed—for good and all!

CHAPTER IX

OUMWAIDJIK

Our new residence might fitly be described as 'the end of the end' of the world. Nearly one thousand miles north of Kamchatka and within a day's journey of the Polar Sea, Oumwaidjik stands on a narrow reef, fully exposed in summer to the huge breakers of Bering Sea, but protected in winter by precipitous mountains from the furious blizzards that sweep over Arctic Siberia. One wonders how human beings can exist in this gloomy region, utterly devoid of fuel and the barest necessaries of life. For eight months of the year the place is ice-locked, but even during the brief summer a sail very rarely breaks the sky-line.

The sudden change from a snug ward-room to a filthy hut is not a pleasant experience at any time. It was rendered doubly disagreeable in our case by the fact that two months at least

OUMWAIDJIK, BERING STRAITS, WHERE THE AUTHOR WAS KEPT BY THE TCHUKTCHIS TILL RESCUED BY THE WHALER 'BELVEDERE.'
(1) CACHE FOR STORING WALRUS MEAT; (2) FIGHTING AND WRESTLING RING; (3) THE AUTHOR'S HUT

must elapse before we could hope to continue our journey; for here, as in Northern Alaska, it is quite impossible to travel except in winter-time by dog-sleigh over the frozen 'tundra.' One Koari, a tall, strapping fellow about fifty years of age, was chief of Oumwaidjik, or rather headman, for there are no chiefs among the Tchuktchis. Koari had amassed more whalebone, furs, and walrus tusks than his fellows, and was thus leader of the community. He was therefore selected by Captain Tuttle to be our 'guide, philosopher, and friend' during our lengthened stay in the dreary settlement, and was also deputed to see that dog-sleighs were forthcoming to convey us to Anadyrsk as soon as the ground was fit for travel. Anadyrsk, a tiny settlement situated on the river of that name, is the Ultima Thule of Russian civilisation in Siberia, but is yet a good four hundred miles south of Oumwaidjik. According to Koari, the journey was as easy as falling off a log. 'White men, plenty flour, plenty calico, give Koari. Koari give good dog, good sled —catch-um ten sleeps easy:' which, being

interpreted, meant that our friend would, on payment of the above-mentioned stores, transport us to the white settlement in ten days at most. The eagerness with which our outfit was seized and securely housed by this self-crowned King of Oumwaidjik awakened, at the time, no suspicion in my mind, nor did I attach much importance to the fact that the word 'Anadyrsk' seemed to convey nothing to our Tchuktchi host or any of his followers. That village, I reasoned, was probably known among them by another name. 'Me know, catch-um plenty house, plenty white man, ten sleep,' was the sole but somewhat vague information that we could gleam anent our journey and destination, and with this we were forced to be content. Subsequent events have convinced me that Koari was one of those plausible smooth-faced scoundrels that would inspire confidence in a Scotland Yard detective, for as a 'Chevalier d'Industrie,' he would certainly have made his mark in a more civilised sphere. I have never met his equal for cruelty, cunning, and duplicity, characteristics rendered the more deadly by the fine intellectual face and frank

genial manner that masked them. The man, in short, was a born actor, and we landed in his cursed village firmly convinced that we possessed one staunch friend at least among the crowd of scowling faces that greeted our arrival on the beach.

The dwelling first assigned to us by Koari was not the ordinary Tchuktchi habitation, which consists of walrus-hides stretched over a whale-rib framework. On landing we looked around in vain for traces of our stores; but our baggage was quickly placed on a dog-sleigh and dragged perhaps three hundred yards to a kind of shed, which, small as it was, towered over the low circular huts around it. The structure was of rough deal planks, and had originally been intended for a refuge at Point Hope, on the Arctic Ocean. Heavy ice having rendered the latter unapproachable, the house was eventually traded to Koari, and, the boards being numbered, was easily run up by the crew of the trading schooner that had failed to reach her destination. Thus a mere accident enabled us to live in comparative seclusion for the first few weeks; for,

although our residence was barely 11 feet by 8 feet, reeked with damp, and (having been inhabited by Tchuktchis) swarmed with vermin, it was at any rate provided with a window, a watertight roof, and a door with a stout padlock. Our hut had no chimney, which, as we had no coal, mattered little. A couple of small coal-oil stoves, however, were speedily set going; and with the additional aid of a kerosene lamp the place soon began to look more habitable. But, although we had already adopted the native dress of furs and seal-skin boots, we suffered a good deal from cold the first two or three nights, and were glad to crawl into our sleeping bags long before sunset. Fuel was a source of constant anxiety for the future. There is not a splinter of wood to be had for many hundred miles from here, and our supply of coal-oil was necessarily limited. But Captain Tuttle had kindly left us a small table, and a couple of empty cases furnished us with chairs. We were also provided with perhaps a dozen books and a pack of playing cards, so that, everything considered, we were even better off (as regards comfort) than we had imagined it

possible to be on the bleak barren shores of Bering Straits.

The hut was soon crowded to suffocation by natives, and the stench (for reasons which I shall presently explain) becoming unbearable, I left the place in charge of Harding, and started off, followed by a small crowd of men and boys, to inspect our new surroundings.

The village of Oumwaidjik consists of perhaps fifty walrus-hide huts, inhabited by about three hundred souls. The settlement stands at the extremity of a long low spit (about three miles long by two broad), composed in the centre of marshland surrounded by deep shingle down to the sea. The spit is but a few feet above sea-level, and undulating ridges of shingle far inland denote that this dreary patch was once almost entirely submerged. Two or three large salt-water lakes some distance from the sea bear out this theory. A number of grassy mounds in the centre of the village give it somewhat the appearance of an old Roman encampment. These were formerly the underground winter dwellings of the Tchuktchis, the old whale-ribs

used as rafters being still visible. These subterranean abodes are now entirely discarded, and are used chiefly as 'caches' for provisions, which a large number of dogs renders very necessary. The latter are snarling, ill-tempered brutes, and somewhat disquieting at first to a stranger. But I soon found that a pebble or two sent a whole pack of them flying, never to return.

The Tchuktchis may be classed as two distinct tribes, of which there are naturally many subdivisions: (1) the Coast Tchuktchis, who inhabit the seaboards of the Arctic Ocean and Bering Straits, and subsist chiefly by hunting and fishing; and (2) the Reindeer Tchuktchis, who roam about the interior north of Anadyrsk, and derive a living from the animal in question. Hovgaard rates the Coast Tchuktchis at 2,000 and the Reindeer Tchuktchis at from 3,000 to 10,000. I fancy, however, that if we put down the entire Tchuktchi race at 10,000 we shall probably rather over- than underestimate their numbers.

TCHUKTCHI NATIVES, OUMWAIDJIK, N.-E. SIBERIA, BERING STRAITS

The Tchuktchis have been called, and with reason, the Soudanese of Siberia; for they are unquestionably the bravest and most warlike race indigenous to that lone land of mystery and stupendous distances. The Ostiaks, Yakoutes, and other natives bring in their yearly tribute of furs or ivory with unfailing regularity. They are more or less within the jurisdiction of the 'Tchinovnik'; but the Tchuktchi, secure in his mountain fastnesses, several hundred miles north of the northernmost Russian settlement, can snap his fingers with impunity at all law and order. Indeed, Koari himself had never even heard of Russia or the Great White Tsar, and I fancy would have questioned the supremacy of even that mighty potentate over the strip of territory that acknowledged our fur-clad friend as ruler.

But the halo of romance shed by its bravery and independence over this wild race is sadly blurred after a few days' residence in their midst. The Tchuktchis are noted (even among the Alaskan Eskimo) as being the filthiest people in creation, and I can honestly indorse this

statement. It would be quite impossible to describe even the least repulsive details of their daily life, which, for the first two or three days of our sojourn at Oumwaidjik, rendered eating a matter of the greatest difficulty. The name given by whalers to the natives of this coast is 'Masinker,' which, in one of the many local dialects, signifies 'Good.' The addition of a single letter would perhaps have been more descriptive (if less melodious), for the presence of even a couple of Tchuktchis in Drury Lane, on a crowded night, would, I am firmly convinced, speedily clear the theatre. The odour is indescribable, but so powerful and penetrating that it clung to our furs for months after we left the place, and filtered into our closed windows from the nearest hut, ten paces away. This characteristic smell of the Tchuktchi is chiefly caused by a certain emanation of the human body which enters largely into his daily life. The fluid is used for cleaning food platters, drinking cups, &c., is employed for tanning purposes, and is also prepared as a disgusting substitute for soap. I tried in vain to discover

the origin of this strange and, to civilised ideas, very offensive custom, which also prevails, but in a lesser degree, among the Alaskan Eskimo.

The latter are, physically speaking, very inferior to their Asiatic neighbours, who are fine powerful men averaging 5 ft. 8 in. We saw at least half a dozen at Oumwaidjik who exceeded 6 feet in height. Furs are worn throughout the year, the men being clad in the deerskin 'parka' (which here, unlike the Eskimo fashion, is secured by a walrus-hide belt) and hair-seal boots and breeches. A cap is rarely worn, but a hood fastened to the parka is drawn over the head in bad weather. Men and boys have the crown and base of the skull closely shaved, leaving a coarse circular fringe of hair, which at a distance gives them a curiously monastic appearance. The women are queer undersized little creatures (even smaller than their Eskimo sisters), but are when young distinctly prepossessing, although their filthy habits and appearance counteract any good looks they may possess. They wear a kind of loose bloomer costume, or deerskin 'combinations' made in

one piece and trimmed at the neck and wrists with wolverine. The hair is worn in two long plaits intertwined with gaudy beads. Some wear strings of the latter thrust through holes bored in the upper part of the ear, the lobe being left intact. As soon as a child is born it is sewn into a deer-skin bag, which leaves only the head uncovered, from which it only emerges like a chrysalis when it has found its legs.

Koari's hut[1] may be taken as a fair specimen of a Tchuktchi dwelling. It was constructed of two thicknesses of walrus-hide stretched over a nearly circular wha' rib framework, the latter being used in the absence of wood. The door-frame and doorway were, however, made of pieces of wreckage found on the shore. The house measured 45 feet long by 35 feet wide and 18 feet high, and was carpeted with walrus-hides strewn over a kind of 'parquet' of whale-skin—white and smooth to the touch, but exuding an abominable stench, on

[1] This was the largest and most comfortable hut in Oumwaidjik. All the other dwellings were considerably smaller, and many of those occupied by the poorer natives were not a quarter the size.

A NATIVE HUT OF WALRUS-HIDE—OUMWAIDJIK

account of the tanning process already alluded to. A thick curtain of deer-skin was stretched right across the hut, separating the living room from the sleeping quarters. The former was surrounded by a low platform formed of beaten earth and thickly covered with deer-skins, which also covered the walls of the room, while the floor was strewn with the skins of five or six polar bears. Half a dozen seal-oil lamps are kept incessantly alight here throughout the winter. They just suffice to accentuate the perpetual darkness and to maintain, even during the coldest weather, a temperature of 65° Fahr. The lamps, which diffuse a disgusting odour, are also used for cooking purposes. When the sleeping chamber is crowded with naked men and women and children (as it frequently was during the latter part of our stay), the heat becomes almost unbearable, and the fetid odour of unwashed humanity loathsome beyond description.

There was little inducement to take exercise at Oumwaidjik, where one was always knee-deep in either mud or loose shingle. I don't know

which was the worse; perhaps the mud, for it caked like pebbles on furs till it became almost impossible to remove it. A sandy patch about a hundred yards long by sixty wide, covered with coarse wiry grass, a short distance from the settlement, was the only place where one could walk in comfort, but this gaol-like promenade somewhat palled upon one after the first few days. My preliminary inspection of Oumwaidjik and its environs was therefore not a protracted one; but I was accompanied throughout by many of the poorer natives, who seemed to regard me with much curiosity, not unmingled with pity. They probably marvelled (and no wonder!) that any sane being should voluntarily expose himself to miseries and hardships that might be avoided by staying away from their desolate home.

The wintry sunlight was fading, and the sun sinking like a ball of fire into the cold grey sea, when I returned to the hut guided by the one solitary light in the settlement that gleamed from our window. Harding was in despair, for our tiny room was tenanted by an even larger crowd

than I had left there an hour before. Loud and almost threatening demands for tobacco assailed me; but I doled the latter out very sparingly, for we had barely sufficient for ourselves. Next to whisky, a Tchuktchi will do anything for tobacco. The very babes are given it, as a treat, to suck. Our visitors were composed of the poorest, and therefore the filthiest, portion of the community, and exhaled a perfume that recalled their presence for many days. Koari had not appeared on the scene since we landed, but he presently swaggered in, followed by two or three followers. His entry was the signal for a general stampede of our tormentors, who were kicked out with scant ceremony by their chief. I was somewhat surprised to find that the latter's manner had completely changed since the morning. The smooth-tongued, mild-mannered Koari of the 'Bear' was now a surly, bullying ruffian, who evidently wished to impress his companions with his contempt for white men as a class, and ourselves in particular. A furtive wink, however, from one of his men reassured me; for it

was evidently meant to convey that our genial host had been indulging in more drink than he could conveniently carry. I noted, therefore, with some relief, that the remainder of our visitors were, at any rate, sober. A careful examination of our personal effects then took place, by Koari's orders. This outrage I felt at first strongly inclined to resent, but, knowing the hopelessness of any argument with a drunken man, finally submitted. Guns, revolvers, instruments, books, clothing, were then tumbled out of our bags pell-mell and closely overhauled. Fortunately, the sight of firearms seemed to recall our friend to his senses, especially when assured that we were well supplied with cartridges, and had (in addition to what he had already seen) two Derringers about us. This fact seemed to carry weight, for a peremptory shout and tipsy wave of the hand from the great man suddenly brought the proceedings to a close. Our inebriated friend then seated himself on the floor with a loud crash that shook the whole hut, and hiccupped a hope that we found our lodgings 'good.'

A polite but scarcely truthful affirmative seemed to mollify Koari, who thereupon produced from the depths of his 'parka' an old beer bottle encrusted with filth and stoppered with a piece of dirty rag. To avoid further trouble, however, I accepted my host's pressing invitation, and raised the vessel to my lips. The liquid it contained looked, and smelt, like turpentine. A drop which escaped by accident into my mouth burnt my throat like vitriol, and brought on a fit of coughing that raised the first smile I had yet seen on the dark sullen faces of my gruesome neighbours; for it was the villanous spirit called whisky by the unscrupulous Yankee traders who barter it on this coast, and who should be hanged for their pains. I had been told by the officers on board the 'Bear' that no 'Hootchinoo' had been landed for two years at Oumwaidjik, and that there was not a glass of the stuff in the place. They had added that no man's life is safe for an instant in a Tchuktchi settlement where it is procurable. I was therefore scarcely overjoyed when assured by Koari

that 'there was plenty more where this came from.'

It was now getting on for 9 P.M., and we had fasted for twelve hours. Our visitors showed no signs of moving, however, but sat on chatting among themselves and criticising our appearance very much as we ourselves are in the habit of doing at the Westminster Aquarium, outside the cage of some denizen of distant lands or strange freak of nature. Half a dozen anxious faces, too, were flattened against the window in the dark outside. This was one of our petty annoyances at Oumwaidjik. For the first week we were never alone, for to bar the door was to drive our observers in a body to the window. At length it occurred to me to screen the glass with the small Union Jack destined to play so important a part in the future, and we enjoyed, for a time, a certain amount of seclusion.

Towards 9.30 P.M. my patience was rapidly becoming exhausted by the pangs of hunger, and I made signs to Koari, who was now partially sober, that we wished to partake of food, and should be grateful if he would produce the stores confided

to his care that morning. A man was at once despatched, ostensibly for the purpose, but we awaited his return for quite an hour. I may here mention that we had brought supplies for two months, consisting of tinned soups and meats, pemmican, biscuits, tea, and other comforts, which would have made life at any rate bearable under the depressing circumstances. The reader may, therefore, picture our feelings when the messenger returned with a large piece of raw seal-meat, reeking with oil, and nothing else. The time had now evidently come for an explanation, which we forthwith demanded, and insisted that our own provisions be at once produced.

But a Tchuktchi is as tenacious as a Chinaman, and as wily as a Jew. On seeing our determined demeanour, Koari was at once full of apologies. 'There had been some mistake—the seal-meat was meant as a present to celebrate our arrival—of course the stores should immediately be sent for.' And so they were, to the extent of twenty tins of preserved meat and soups, a little tea, and two tins of biscuits. 'The rest,' our friend

remarked, 'would be far better in his keeping;' and he added, significantly, 'Plenty bad man Oumwaidjik—steal—kill white man—no kill—steal Koari!'

So saying, this wily old gentleman takes his departure, closely followed by his hangers-on, who are evidently grinning in their sleeves at our discomfiture—not to say rage. Retaliation, even expostulation, are of course out of the question; but it now seems pretty clear that we have received all we shall ever get of our own provisions, and that we are in the power of a scoundrel who, if so minded, can do away with us without the slightest fear of detection or punishment.

But 'hope springs eternal in the human breast,' and a spoonful of good hot soup is sometimes better than volumes of human sympathy and encouragement. A supper of tinned ox-tail followed by canned beef may not sound appetising to the dyspeptic Londoner; but it suffices to shed a rosier glow over our gloomy thoughts; so much so that despondency is gradually succeeded by a resigned if not cheerful

confidence in the future. Indeed, a last pipe convinces me that Koari (although somewhat offensive under the influence of alcohol) is not, in the main, a bad fellow. A drunken man is never accountable for his actions, and his anxiety to protect our property may, after all, be only a proof that he is kindly disposed towards ourselves. Besides, has he not assured me only this afternoon that dogs have already been sent for, far away into the interior, to take us to Anadyrsk within 'two moons'?[1] This fact, at any rate, is a distinct point in my inebriated host's favour. The reverse side of the medal, however, is not so pleasant, and shows me only too plainly that life at Oumwaidjik is not going to be a bed of roses. To-night, as I lie awake and shivering in the cold and darkness, I cannot help recalling how a certain friend of mine in England (who has occasionally 'roughed it' in a comfortable shooting-box and braved the stormy deep in a 500-ton yacht) predicted that this overland journey would be ridiculously easy. 'There would be no hardships and very

[1] 'A moon,' a month.

little discomfort. It would be a pleasure trip—a regular picnic,' and so forth. And as I knock the ashes from my pipe, and dive into a sleeping-bag to shut out the stench that pervades our hut, I picture my friend, clad in purple and fine linen, and dining at his ease in some luxurious club or glittering restaurant. And I may, perhaps, under the circumstances, be forgiven for wishing that, if only for a few moments, he could lie here by my side—and appreciate the wisdom of his prophecy.

For, as Rudyard Kipling truly remarks :—

> The toad beneath the harrow knows
> Exactly where each tooth point goes.
> The butterfly upon the road
> Preaches contentment to that toad !

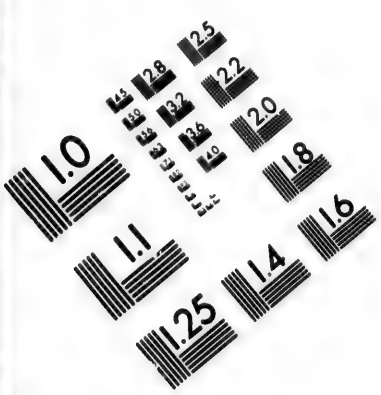
CHAPTER X

OUMWAIDJIK

(II)

Our life, during the first few days at Oumwaidjik, was bearable enough. The day following our arrival Koari atoned for his misdeeds of the previous day by appearing at dawn with a large piece of deer-meat—a very acceptable gift—which lasted us for some days. The meat had just arrived from Kee-eeni,[1] an island to the north, where our host kept a small herd of reindeer, and where his wife Siwunga, his eldest son Oyuràpok, and a few retainers lived throughout the summer to tend them. We found the venison delicious, but it was the first and last piece we ever received! Some more was brought down by Siwunga when she returned to Oumwaidjik for the winter a few weeks

[1] Marked 'Kayne Island' on most maps.



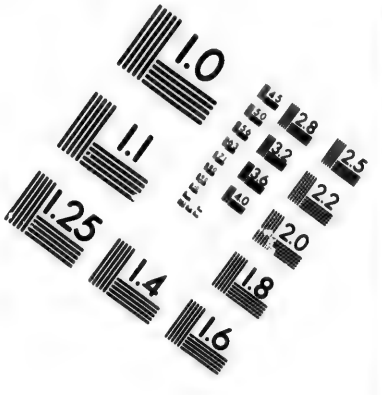


IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)

later, but it was almost putrid. The Tchuktchis prefer it thus, and rarely eat it when fresh.

Few of the coast Tchuktchis are possessed of reindeer, but Koari had, by trading, amassed sufficient wealth to enable him to purchase and drive down a few hundred of these animals from the interior. He and his family could thus look with equanimity on a scarcity of seals and walrus, upon which the coast tribes mainly subsist. The usefulness of reindeer in these Arctic deserts can scarcely be overestimated, and is well demonstrated by the comparative welfare enjoyed by the wandering Tchuktchis when compared to their brethren of the sea. Starvation and scurvy may be raging on the coast, but inland these disasters are rendered impossible by an abundance (thanks to the reindeer) of clothing, meat, and milk. Mr. George Kennan has stated that the Tchuktchis never utilise the latter,[1] but this can scarcely be correct, for perhaps a dozen deer were kept at Oumwaidjik, and I frequently saw the operation

[1] See *Tent Life in Siberia*, by George Kennan.

A HERD OF REINDEER AT EAST CAPE, N.-E. SIBERIA, BERING STRAITS

of milking performed by the women—and in a very peculiar manner. The hands are never used, the milk being sucked from the animal and spat into a bowl. It is rarely drunk, however, but made into a kind of cheese and consumed in various stages of decomposition. When a deer is killed, nothing is wasted. Even the bones are crushed, and the marrow, flavoured with seal oil, is eaten raw. A cupful of this preparation was sent to us by Koari as a *bonne-bouche*.[1]

The disposal of our time at Oumwaidjik was not an easy matter. The days dragged away terribly slowly. We looked back to the departure of the 'Bear,' at the expiration of a week, through an imaginary vista of many weary months, and the remaining fifty odd days before us became too appalling to contemplate. More

[1] To appreciate the varied uses of the reindeer, we need go no farther than Lapland, which, with 400,000 deer, supplies Northern Europe with smoked reindeer hams at 6*d*. a pound, smoked tongues at 6*d*. each, dried hides at from 5*s*. to 7*s*. each, tanned hides at from 8*s*. to 12*s*. each, and with 28,000 carcasses to the butchers' shops in addition to what is consumed by the Lapps themselves. Reindeer hair is largely used, on account of its buoyancy, for stuffing life-saving apparatus, while the strongest and best glue is made from the horns.

than two-thirds of the twenty-four hours were devoted to sleep (or as much of it as we could get), and our day commenced late in the forenoon, to terminate (in a sleeping-bag) at an hour when most civilised beings are thinking about dressing for dinner. Food (cooked by Harding over a coal-oil stove) was partaken of twice a day, and, though extremely limited in quantity, was dawdled over to kill time. A fortnight exhausted our library, and cards then became our sole relaxation during the hour that elapsed between the conclusion of the evening meal and bed-time. An almost daily visitation of heavy rain, alternating with furious gales, rendered outdoor exercise anything but attractive; but a wholesome dread of scurvy drove us out of doors for a couple of hours every day. We took the opportunity on one occasion of trying to reach the snow-clad mountains at the back of the settlement, about five miles distant, and were not surprised to hear, on our return, that no native had ever succeeded in making the journey during the summer. The distance we travelled was probably under two miles, which

took over four hours to accomplish, and which partly deprived us of the use of our nether limbs for forty-eight hours afterwards. Sport would have been some consolation, but the little there was scarcely repaid the trouble of carrying a gun. We managed at first to bag a few duck, which formed a welcome addition to our menu, but these disappeared towards the end of September. It was not safe, either, to stray far away from the settlement, on account of the dense fogs that, even on the brightest day, would descend as if by magic, and render objects a few feet off quite invisible. We were hopelessly lost on one occasion, not a mile from the village, and did not regain it for some hours. Experience warned us, after a time, of the approach of these mists, for they were usually preceded by a curious meteorological state of the atmosphere. A tiny sandpiper would assume the dimensions of a large bird, and a skin 'baidarà' on the beach appear the size of a good-sized vessel cast ashore by the sea. Near the lakes we occasionally saw a few snipe and a quantity of enormous white owls that,

unlike the English species, appeared to be endowed with sight during the day-time. One we shot measured 4 ft. 9 in. between the wing extremities. These are considered a great delicacy by the natives, but we found them musty and uneatable.

During one of our rambles an incident occurred which might have been attended with unpleasant consequences. Harding had picked up an old paddle on the beach—a bleached, broken thing, that had apparently lain there rotting for years—and used it as a walking-stick on our return home. While passing one of the huts, a ragged old native darted out, wrenched the paddle from my companion's hands, and threw it on the ground, jabbering vociferously as he did so, and foaming with rage. A menacing crowd began to assemble, and I was not sorry to see Koari emerge from a dwelling hard by and hurry to the scene of the disturbance. The aged and irate gentleman in rags was, it appeared, a 'Shaman' or 'Medicine-man,' and we had, according to this worthy, grossly violated the laws of the country by desecrating a grave.

Koari, to do him justice, did all he could to appease our accuser, but seemed himself somewhat uneasy when the latter slunk back, with a curse, into his hut. No one would touch or even look at the paddle. Finally the chief took Harding quietly aside, and advised him to return at once to the spot where it was found and replace it. This was done notwithstanding the darkness and a drizzling rain, for we had no wish to cross swords with the 'Shamans,' who, among the Tchuktchis, are all-powerful. Indeed Koari had already told me that they strongly resented our presence in Oumwaidjik. Seeing, however, that a Tchuktchi is generally torn up and devoured by the dogs within an hour of his burial, I failed to see the object of carefully placing his property by his side for use in another world. One could not walk for twenty yards in any direction at Oumwaidjik without kicking against skulls or portions of human skeletons that had been strewn about by these animals. But even Koari himself, although a shrewd, sensible man in other respects, lived in perfect terror of the 'Shamans.' He fre-

quently warned me of the danger of giving them offence, and assured me of their power to create or avert storms, and even kill men, by the sheer exercise of their will. A Tchuktchi is fearless enough in moments of real danger, but is as nervous regarding his bodily ailments as the veriest hypochondriac at Vichy or Carlsbad. The 'Shamans,' therefore, reap a rich harvest in the way of medical fees, and frequently become rich in furs and whalebone, for money is of course unknown. The 'Shamans' were our worst and most vindictive enemies, their enmity being largely due to my small medicine chest, the contents of which were in daily demand.

The Tchuktchis are very reticent about their religion, and when this subject was touched upon Koari invariably changed the conversation. I gleaned, however, that a man who dies a violent death insures eternal happiness, but an easy lingering dissolution is generally followed by torment in the next world.[1] This, perhaps,

[1] Baron Maidel, the traveller, relates the following legend (told him by a Tchuktchi in 1869) anent the creation of the world:—

'A Good Spirit created human beings, but the latter and their

accounts for the cheerfulness with which a Tchuktchi will risk his life at sea or in mortal combat, and the terror with which a malady (which we should consider trifling) inspires him. But death, under any shape, is lightly looked upon by most Tchuktchis, who seldom mourn a lost one, even for an hour. Many perished from starvation and other causes while we were at Oumwaidjik. Every third day, on an average, Koari would laughingly advise me not to walk in a certain direction unless I wished to see a corpse, and, when a young mother murdered her child in an adjacent hut to ours, no more notice was taken of the occurrence than if she had merely chastised it.

The most weird and terrible Tchuktchi ceremony is undoubtedly the 'kamitok.' This is the putting to death (with their free consent)

posterity were very wicked. The Good Spirit, therefore, sent violent storms over the world, by which America, Wrangel Land (in the Arctic Ocean), and the Tchuktchi country were torn apart and the islands and Kolyutchin Bay were formed. The tempest carried the people in various directions, and thus formed the different races represented to-day by the Ostiaks, Yakoutes, Tchuktchis, Eskimos, and Russians.' 'A remarkable resemblance,' adds the author, 'to the Biblical accounts of the Deluge and the Tower of Babel!'

of the aged or useless members of the community. When a Tchuktchi's powers have decreased to an appreciable extent (from age, accident, or disease), a family council is held and a day fixed for the victim's departure for another world. Perhaps the most curious feature of the whole affair is the indifference shown by the doomed one, who takes a lively interest in the proceedings, and often assists in the preparations for his own death. The execution is always preceded by a feast, where seal and walrus meat are greedily devoured, and whisky consumed until all are intoxicated. A spontaneous burst of singing and the muffled roll of walrus-hide drums then herald the fatal moment. At a given signal a ring is formed by the relatives and friends, the entire settlement looking on in the background. The executioner (usually the victim's son or brother) then steps forward, and, placing his right foot against the back of the condemned, slowly strangles him to death with a walrus-thong. A 'kamitok' took place during the latter part of our stay at Oumwaidjik, but as most of the spectators had

THE 'KAMTTOK,' OUMWAIIOMK, BERING STRAITS, N.-E. SIBERIA
Sept. 27, 1896

drunk themselves into a state of frenzy we deemed it prudent to remain concealed until it was over. Women are never put to death by this means, and the origin of the custom is as obscure as it is ancient. Its institution is probably due to the barren nature of this land, where every mouthful of food is precious and where men must literally 'work to live.'

According to Captain Healey (late commander of the 'Bear'), the 'kamitok' is practised, under another name, by the Eskimo tribes inhabiting the Alaskan shores of the Arctic Ocean. The following anecdote will show that the Alaskan Eskimo looks upon death with as little indifference as his Siberian neighbour. Captain Healey, after a year's absence from the Arctic, inquired of an Eskimo near Point Barrow whether one 'Charlie,' an old native he had known the previous year, was still alive and in good health. 'Oh no!' was the cool reply; 'Charlie's dead. I killed him.' 'Killed him?' inquired Healey, taken aback; 'what for?' 'Oh, poor Charlie was very sick with pains all over, and asked me

to shoot him. And I did so with his own gun, which he gave me to keep afterwards!'

Evil spirits apparently predominate in the Tchuktchi religion, and all the ceremonies we saw performed appeared to be of a propitiatory nature. When a long sea voyage was contemplated, the Shamans would precede the departure of its crew by strange antics on the beach presumably for the purpose of insuring fine weather. I noticed, however, that on these occasions it generally blew harder than usual. A mountain at the back of the settlement was spoken of by Koari with bated breath, as the abode of devils, and I was gravely informed that any one approaching it within a certain distance was seized, and strangled, by invisible hands. Even the poorest natives were sometimes seen casting pieces of seal-meat (which they could ill spare) into the waves, not only to avert storms, but also to induce their gods to send them food in the shape of bear or walrus; for the practice was continued long after the ice had come down, and when there was but little open water.

The yearly catch at Oumwaidjik generally

THE 'SHAMANS,' OR 'MEDICINE-MEN,' STILLING THE WAVES, OUMWAIDJIK, BERING STRAITS, N.E. SIBERIA

averages from two to three whales, twenty to thirty walrus, and any number of hair-seals, which latter form the staple food of the Tchuktchi, and provide him with the garments for his nether limbs. The hair-seal must not be confounded with the fur-seal (which is seldom if ever found north of the Pribilov Islands in Bering Sea); but although the skin of the former is practically worthless, the flesh is far preferable as an article of food to that of the more valuable animal. Indeed it is not at all bad eating, after a time, though somewhat too oily at first for a white man's taste. The fur of the hair-seal is a kind of dirty grey flecked with dark spots, and is short and bristly. It is warm and durable, and therefore well adapted for breeches and footwear; for in these latitudes it is of course impossible to wear boots of European make and material. The hair-seal is found in immense numbers between Greenland and Labrador, where an average of 300,000 are taken every season, chiefly on account of the oil; for, as I have said, the skins have little or no commercial importance in the European and American markets.

Hair-seals are shot nearly every day at Oumwaidjik throughout the winter, and a Tchuktchi takes up a rifle and goes out for one very much as we in England go out, for amusement, for a brace of birds. But walrus are very much scarcer, and their capture involves a considerable amount of trouble and skill, to say nothing of danger. The beach was lined night and day by the poorer natives, who eke out a miserable existence by watching for these animals and giving notice of their approach. As soon as one appeared within reasonable distance, four or five 'baidaràs' were at once launched (for the small 'kayak' is never used here), and set out at a terrific pace; for the crew of the first boat up gets the lion's share of the spoil. The old-fashioned harpoon is now discarded for the Winchester rifle, so that accidents are rare, although a boat is sometimes upset. The walrus is a disgusting brute to look at—a distorted, shapeless mass of discoloured flesh, covered in places with many bristles. The one we saw brought ashore measured about 10 feet long and had quite that girth. It looked to weigh at least

A TCHUKTCHI'S RETURN FROM SEAL-SHOOTING—THE DAY'S BAG

a ton. Walrus-meat is absolutely sickening, but the Tchuktchis devour it greedily, both cooked and raw.

These animals may be heard blowing a long distance off, and in foggy weather have many a time saved a ship by their timely warning of the proximity of land. Notwithstanding their huge bulk and formidable tusks, they are shy, wary animals, and we were directed by Koari to carefully screen our lamp at night for fear of driving them away from the coast. Anent this, Elliott relates that they resort to a very singular method of keeping guard when sleeping on land or on drifting floes. The explorer writes :—

'In this herd of three or four hundred male walrus that were beneath my vision, though nearly all were sleeping, yet the movement of one would disturb the other, which would raise its head in a stupid manner for a few moments, grunt once or twice, and before lying down to sleep again it would strike the slumbering form of its nearest companion with its tusks, causing that animal to rouse up in turn for a few moments also, grunt, and pass the blow on to the next lying

down in the same manner. Thus the word was transferred, as it were, constantly and unceasingly around, always keeping some one or two aroused, which consequently were more alert than the rest.'

The same traveller's graphic description of the walrus coincides with my own impressions. 'Sitting as I did' (he writes) 'to the leeward of them, with a strong wind blowing in at the same time from seaward, which, ever and anon, fairly covered many of them with foaming surf spray, therefore they took no notice of me during the three or more hours of my study. I was first astonished at observing the raw, naked appearance of the hide. It was a skin covered with multitudes of pustular-looking warts and large boils or pimples, without hair or fur save scattered and almost invisible hairs; it was wrinkled in deep, flabby seam folds and marked by dark red venous lines, which showed out in strong contrast through the thicker and thinner yellowish brown cuticle that in turn seemed to be scaling off in places as if with leprosy; indeed, a fair expression of this walrus-hide complexion,

if I may use the term, can be understood by the inspection of the human countenances in the streets and on the highways of our cities which are designated as the faces of "bloats."'

As the reader may, therefore, imagine, a minute examination of the 'ayivak'[1] did not tend to increase the appetite, or arouse any desire to partake of the flesh of this animal, although a quantity of it was invariably placed at our disposal after a 'kill.'

Were it not for seal and walrus, however, the Tchuktchi race would in a very few years be entirely extinct. It is not easy to picture a spot so utterly desolate that even drinking water is scarce and brackish, and vegetation is represented by seaweed on the shore and a few tufts of wiry grass; but this is the case at Oumwaidjik. On the Alaskan shore poppies, daisies, and anemones bloom luxuriantly throughout the summer, and I counted no less than twenty kinds of wild flowers within a radius of a mile from St. Michael. The flowers were poor scentless things, but imparted an air of gaiety to

[1] Tchuktchi, 'walrus.'

the landscape that one may seek in vain on the gloomy fog-laden coast of North-eastern Siberia. It was curious to note how their sterile surroundings had developed the inventive faculties of the Tchuktchis. Wood is entirely lacking, save when the timbers of some wrecked whaler are washed up by the sea; but whalebone efficiently replaces it for beams and supports for the huts, while seal oil and broken deer bones are used as fuel. Walrus-hides are substituted as timber for boats and the walls and roofs of buildings; thongs, made of the same material, form strong serviceable ropes; the skin of the hair-seal supplies clothing and shoe leather, and so on, *ad infinitum*; but there is scarcely an article in daily use which does not owe its origin to one of those three useful animals: the deer, the walrus, or the seal. Nothing is wasted, which is perhaps scarcely surprising in a region where there is so little to waste.

The reader will no doubt ask, 'How can these people manage to exist at all under such miserable conditions, especially the poorer portion of the community?' I can only reply that I

TCHUKTCHIS WALRUS-HUNTING IN BERING STRAITS

have never seen the principle of 'the survival of the fittest' more graphically portrayed than at Oumwaidjik. The poorer class suffer there in the same degree that they do in London or Paris, probably more so, for parochial relief does not as yet enter into the Tchuktchi method of government. Koari and another man (whose inferior position, as compared to the chief, was demonstrated by the middle and little fingers of the latter) had collected a stock of flour (to say nothing of our own stores!) that placed them beyond the reach of actual starvation. This they had done by trading furs and whalebone with the San Francisco whalers and receiving in exchange flour, molasses, calico, Winchester rifles, ammunition, tobacco, and whisky. Koari's deer would have sufficed to feed the whole settlement for a year, but that wily old chief would sooner have lost his eyesight than part with a pound of venison without adequate payment. His greed and obduracy were a byword among the poorer natives, who could of course afford none of the aforementioned luxuries. They were repaid for many weary hours of walrus-

watching at all seasons, and in all weathers, by scraps of noisome food, cast-off raiment, and (very rarely) a tiny screw of tobacco, and lived, so far as we could see, to a large extent on raw seaweed. A species of the latter that I frequently saw them eating was of a red colour, and, in shape, something like a large radish. It contained a soft greenish pulp with a sickly fishy flavour. But these poor starving wretches would eat almost anything. One day I threw a piece of putrid deer-meat to the dogs, and a walrus-watcher who happened to be standing by rushed forward and devoured it before my very eyes. A dead dog was invariably skinned and its hide used for clothing at Oumwaidjik, but the carcass was seldom allowed to lie long upon the ground. I have seen men and dogs fighting, on more than one occasion, for the ghastly meal. It is terrible to think of the sufferings these poor people must undergo during the long dark winter, and I was therefore surprised to learn from Koari that, notwithstanding his almost unbearable existence, a Tchuktchi pauper is rarely driven to take his own life.

CHAPTER XI

OUMWAIDJIK

(III)

THE first days of October were ushered in by bright clear weather, and fogs and raw humidity were now succeeded by a dry intense cold which we found infinitely preferable. Snow now covered the ground to the depth of several inches, and the ice had made its first appearance in the Straits as early as September 20. The floes were loose and drifting, however, and quickly dispersed by strong winds, for solid sea ice only forms here towards the end of October. We were now favoured, nearly every day, with sunshine and a Mediterranean sky, which would have brightened a less dreary spot, but only intensified the hideous squalor of Oumwaidjik. I have seldom, however, experienced more perfect weather in any part of the world, and the

pure delicious air seemed to inspire one with new life. It also made one ravenously hungry, which, under the circumstances, was rather a drawback; for Koari was adamant as regards our stores, and neither threats nor entreaties would induce him to dole out more than a couple of tins of preserved meat a day—little enough for two hungry men. There was, however, plenty of seal-meat to be had, and to this we gradually became accustomed; but it was galling enough to think of the good things hidden away so near us, and the filthy food we were compelled to eat. We searched, at first, high and low, to try to discover where the old scoundrel had hidden our provisions, and only ascertained towards the latter part of our stay that they had been carefully buried the day after our arrival.[1]

But this glorious weather during the first week in October atoned for many evils, and the knowledge that nearly a month of our period of probation had passed away enabled us almost to enjoy outdoor exercise. Bering Straits, on still

[1] A part of our stores was recovered by the United States Revenue cutter *Bear* during the summer of 1897. Koari had fled into the interior.

clear days, would be covered with floating ice, and present the appearance of a vast white plain, with here and there a lake of sapphire where the floes had broken away. A fusillade of rifles was generally kept up all day by the sealers, and bullets at times whistled unpleasantly close; for the Tchuktchi shoots at random, and in all directions, utterly regardless of consequences. At other times a gale of wind would spring up in the night and carry the ice far away, so that by morning a summer sea would again ripple lazily at our feet, until a solitary berg would come sailing down again from the Arctic, sparkling, like an enchanted island, in the sunshine, and heralding the return of the pack. The latter, towards sunset, would present a marvellous variety of colour, ranging from dazzling white to the tenderest shades of amber, rose, and turquoise, which, towards evening, deepened to violet and grey, and gradually merged into dense mist as night fell and froze the stars into a sky of inky black. I often lingered, cold as it was, after dark to watch the constellations burning, like great lamps, in the clear rarefied atmosphere;

the Great Bear sprawling his awkward shape overhead, the little Pole-star twinkling dimly among the greater lights, and the beautiful Pleiades glittering far away like a cluster of brilliants against a patch of dark velvet.

Occasionally, however, the heavens would suddenly become overcast, and the bright sunlit landscape darken so suddenly that one barely had time to run for shelter before a furious hurricane, accompanied by sleet or rain, was sweeping over the settlement. The coming winter showed its teeth on October 3 with a furious 'poorga' (as the storm-laden gales of North-Eastern Siberia are called), and gave us a graphic foretaste of what we might expect later on. On these occasions the Straits, though a dream of placid beauty in fine weather, were not pleasant to look upon. The deafening roar of the surf rendered sleep impossible, and our hut was violently shaken by every billow that broke upon the beach at least two hundred yards distant. I have never seen such enormous breakers, and I often lay awake throughout the night fully expecting that the waters would overwhelm us

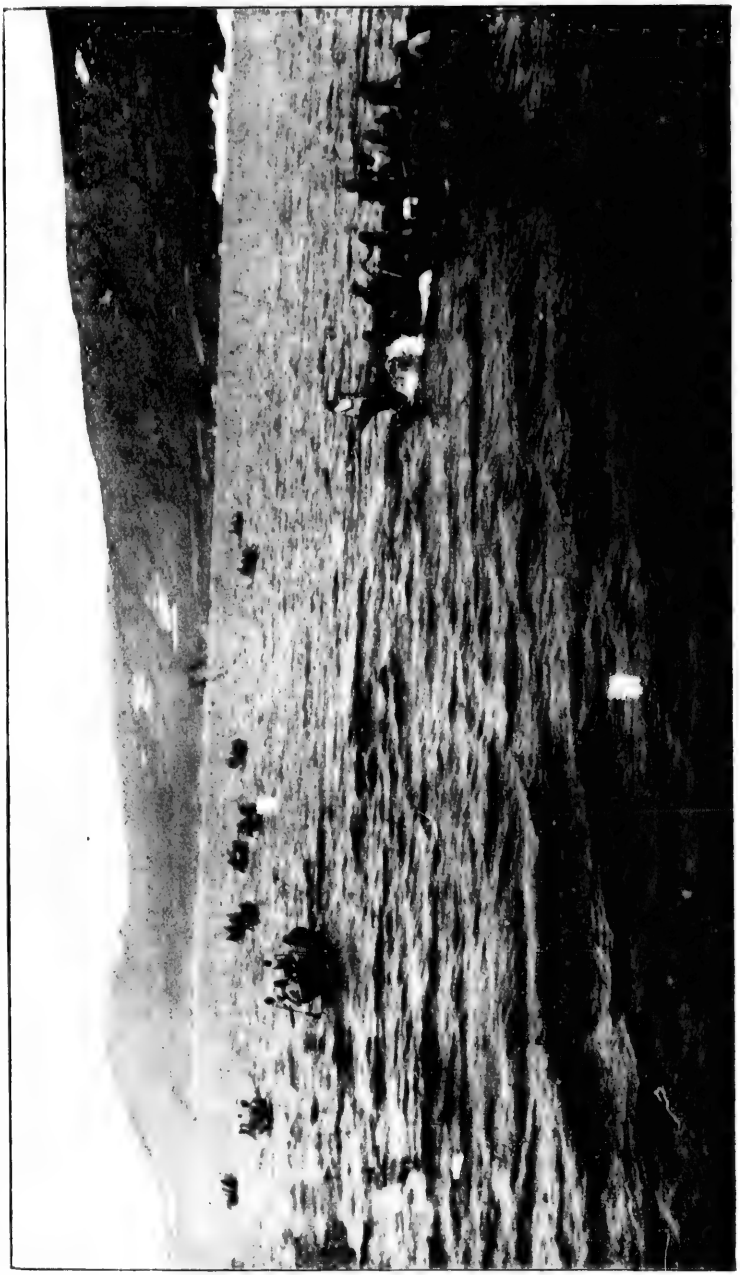
before morning. During stormy weather it was a common occurrence for sea-birds to be caught unawares on the crest of a huge wave and dashed to pieces against the rocky shore, where natives were generally on the look-out to secure them for food. I have seen gulls plucked of their plumage, there and then, and devoured raw and still warm by the poor walrus-watchers, who were thus enabled to obtain a few hours' respite from the hard labour for life to which fate has condemned them.

But even the more prosperous Tchuktchis are by no means idle. One may enter their huts at any hour of the day and yet find them usefully employed. The men are generally out fishing or hunting all day during the summer months, but the women will be busily engaged cooking and sewing, or cleaning and polishing spears and firearms. Some of their needlework was really very fine. The patterns were graceful and intricate, and the blending of colours, in many cases, distinctly artistic.

Great excitement was caused on October 5 by the arrival of Koari's wife and family from Kee-eeni Island. Five 'baidaràs,' loaded down

to the water's edge with putrid deer-meat, were first unloaded. A meal was then discussed in the centre of an admiring crowd on the beach. After, the party proceeded *en masse* to our hut, most of them slightly (but luckily genially) under the influence of liquor. It was a dull, wet day, and the Kee-eeni men were clad in garments made of walrus entrails (which I had not seen before) to keep out the rain. They are as light as a feather and quite waterproof. One man wore a jacket composed entirely of the breasts of eider ducks, which had a marvellously pretty effect. These are made only on St. Lawrence Island, the largest island in Bering Sea, which lies about forty miles south-east of Oumwaidjik. On a clear day it was plainly visible.

Koari's wife, Siwunga, was a short, stout old lady, of about sixty years of age, with the most evil countenance I ever beheld. She was accompanied by two girls—Tingana, a daughter, and Mouga, the wife of Noo-oona, Koari's second son. Oyuràpok, the hope of Koari's house, was a sulky, stupid fellow, whom I mistrusted, and with reason, from the first; but



'BAIDARAS' OFF THE SIBERIAN COAST, BERING SEA

Noo-oona was, with the exception of his father, the most civilised and intelligent Tchuktchi with whom we came in contact. His wife Mouga, although only seventeen years old, was a year his senior; but Tingana, a girl about the same age, was as yet unmarried—as a matter of fact, there is no recognised marriage ceremony among these people. A man may have as many so-called wives as he chooses, provided he can afford to buy them and keep them. Koari had restricted himself to one, and on one occasion I inquired the reason of this moderation. 'Me no want two,' was the reply. 'One wife good speak, all same Koari; but two wife plenty speak—me afraid!'

Tingana and Mouga were distinctly pretty, with fair complexions, pearly teeth, and soft dark eyes, that for a wonder were unmarred by a dirty face. Nearly all Tchuktchi girls have wonderful teeth, but those of the older women are generally worn down nearly to the gums by the constant chewing of seal and walrus hides. This is done to render the latter pliable for working into boots and other articles; but this operation is considered

derogatory to the dignity of the men. A third girl, who had for some time remained in the background, was roughly dragged before us by Oyuràpok, and laughingly introduced as a fellow-stranger in the land. This fact, indeed, was evident at a glance. Tikara was much taller and more swarthy than the little maidens of Oumwaidjik, who appeared to regard her with a pity not devoid of contempt. Her long dark plaits were completely *encased* (not entwined) in blue, white, and yellow beads, and she wore an ill-made linen garment in place of the neat fur dress worn by her companions. The poor girl was a native of the Diomede Islands—three barren, rocky islets situated almost midway between the easternmost point of Asia and Cape Prince of Wales.[1] She had

[1] 'Cape Prince of Wales, which forms the extreme narrowing of Berring Straits, is a high rugged promontory with walls on the south side that are abrupt precipices of a full thousand feet, while the uplands rise, culminating in a snowy crown that is twenty-five hundred feet above the level of the sea. Deep gulches seam these vertical walls, and are the paths of numerous tiny rivulets that trickle and run in cascades down from the spongy moorlands above. When, however, you stand into the Straits, homeward bound from the Arctic Ocean, this cape on that side presents a wholly different outline. It slopes up gradually from the beaches, and presents the appearance of a tundra gently rising to a small ridge-like summit. This lowland on the north side is projected under the sea for a

been enticed from her home by the rascally mate of a small trading schooner, who had promised to take her to San Francisco, but had landed her alone and friendless at Oumwaidjik, where she was perhaps less acquainted with the dialect than we ourselves. Siwunga had, however, taken pity upon her helpless condition, and received her, in a menial capacity, into her own household.

It seemed strange that a native of a place only about a hundred miles distant should be unable to converse with the Oumwaidjik people; but I learnt from Koari that there are many dialects spoken on the Siberian shores of Bering Straits. The languages of the Alaskan Eskimo and Siberian Reindeer and coast natives not unnaturally differ, but there are also dialects peculiar to small settlements almost as dissimilar to the Tchuktchi tongue as French is to English. For example, at Oumwaidjik the word 'kamiyak'

distance of over eight miles in a northerly direction, making an exceedingly dangerous shore, and justly dreaded by the mariner.

'The Siberian side and opposite headland is the bold and lofty East Cape, and is connected with the mainland by a low neck of rolling tundra, which is characteristic of Cape Prince of Wales also. Both of these outposts of two mighty continents present, at a small distance, the resemblance of islands.'—ELLIOTT.

signifies a sleigh and 'kamit' snow. At Tcherénuk, a settlement not twenty miles off to the north-west, snow is called 'pingaigen' and a sleigh 'orogosh.' The inhabitants of the two places can only converse by signs.

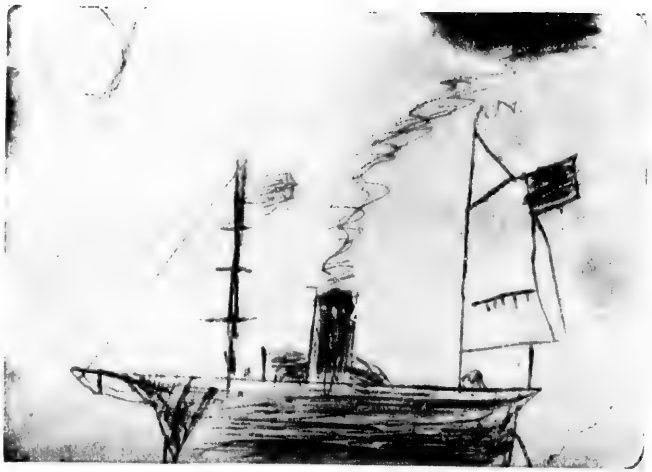
It was pretty clear from my host's subdued manner in her presence that Siwunga, to use a vulgar term, wore the breeches in the Koari 'ménage.' For a few days I cherished the idea that we might win over the old lady to our side, and thereby accomplish two objects: the recovery of our stores, and the hastening of our departure for Anadyrsk. But although Siwunga spoke not a word of English, her unfriendly demeanour and sour looks speedily shattered my hopes, and convinced me that we now had two enemies, instead of one, to deal with. I should perhaps say three, for the lout Oyuràpok, a few days after his arrival, burst open the padlocked door of our hut, and swaggered in to inquire, in an impudent tone, 'if we were not afraid of our lives with so many Tchuktchis arouud us.' The insult was evidently intentional, but the cool reply that Englishmen feared nothing,

and that if anything befell us he, and every man in Oumwaidjik, would be killed by our countrymen before the next year had expired, seemed to quell this offensive youth's ardour, and he left the hut, to return no more for many days, much to Noo-oona's delight, who was watching the proceedings from outside. There was little love lost between the brothers, for Noo-oona was a quiet, well-mannered lad, who to the last remained our firm friend and ally. He would spend hours with us trying to master a few words of English which I taught him, and thus myself managed to pick up a smattering of the Tchuktchi language. The latter is harsh and guttural, and, for a stranger, almost impossible to pronounce with accuracy.[1] But Noo-oona soon became more proficient than his father in the English tongue, and when we left Oumwaidjik could talk quite fluently. He possessed, however, brains far above the average, for the majority of the natives here were of the lowest grade of intelligence, and could no more realise the appearance of a great city or large concourse

[1] See Appendix H.

of people than we can—space. Other natives would invariably look at pictures shown them upside down, but Noo-oona not only avoided this mistake, but contrived to make, without assistance, a very fair sketch of a ship (which is here reproduced) on the back of a playing card that we gave him.

Noo-oona was a famous athlete, and was generally to be found every afternoon in the village playground, a large ring in the centre of the settlement formed by shingle from the beach, stamped into the marshy ground, and devoted to wrestling, running, jumping, and other sports. Most of the games were distinguished by rough horseplay, notably a kind of 'Blind Man's Buff,' from which a lad would sometimes return badly disabled; and another game, when one of the players was flogged with walrus thongs until he yelled, in sober earnest, for mercy. Noo-oona informed us that an athletic contest is held here yearly, which is attended by many of the natives from neighbouring settlements. The sports last several days, and, as large quantities of whisky are consumed on this occasion, I was relieved



ORIGINAL DRAWING OF A STEAM WHALER BY A TCHUKTCHI BOY, AGED 16

(Drawn on the back of a playing card given to him by the Author)

to hear that they would not again be held until the following summer. The Tchuktchis are generally slim, wiry, and extremely powerful, and I have seen a boy fourteen years old pick up a 100-lb. sack of flour and walk away with it with ease. The men are generally fair in their methods of fighting among themselves. Knives are rarely used in disputes, which are generally settled with fists; but they have little idea of sparring, and there is no science whatever about their boxing. They are, however, marvellous marksmen, and as expert with a rifle as with spear or harpoon, while mere children thought nothing of bringing down a bird thirty yards off with a stone thrown from a walrus-hide sling.

Mouga and Tingana were kind merry little souls, and they and Noo-oona were certainly our best friends during that dreary time. Sometimes they would sing and dance for our amusement—especially when they saw us more depressed than usual. Their dancing was not graceful. It consisted of turning round and round on the same spot, and slowly swaying the

upper part of the body after the manner of the 'Dance du Ventre.' Singing and a fish-skin tambourine beaten by Noo-oona furnished the music, which was monotonous and utterly devoid of harmony. Their voices were too excruciating, and as shrill and harsh as an unoiled crank; but, like most amateurs of limited powers, they required little pressing, and often sang me fairly out of the hut and into the snow outside. The intervals between song and dance were generally devoted to the consumption of tobacco, and it seemed strange to see the two girls place a plug in their pretty mouths and chew away with all the nonchalance and complacency of an old 'Shell-back.' The conversation, so far as the ladies were concerned, was not spirited. It chiefly consisted of deep-drawn sighs occasionally varied by the whispered 'Ho-ho' which a Tchuktchi employs to express satisfaction with his entertainer and surroundings. Afternoon tea was sometimes brought to us by Tikara in the shape of cold water and flour mixed into a kind of paste in a vessel of walrus-hide. Oddly enough the Tchuktchis, though very partial to the

bread they occasionally get from whalers, are unaware that it is made with an ingredient that enters so largely into their trading operations—flour. The women of this race must be as hardy as the men. Both Tingana and Mouga would often leave my hut streaming with perspiration, and upon reaching the open air strip naked to the waist, although snow might be falling and the temperature register only a few degrees above zero. And yet pulmonary diseases are rare among the Tchuktchis, where the death-rate is chiefly due to scurvy and the diseases attending insufficient nourishment. Epidemics are practically unknown on the Siberian coast, although smallpox decimates whole settlements among the Eskimo.[1]

The Tchuktchis are frightened to death by a 'Kodak.' It was only with the greatest care and difficulty that I managed to secure snapshots of the women when the latter were quite unaware of my presence or intention. Noo-oona affected an indifference when posing which was

[1] The scourge was first brought to Alaska by the Russians in 1838.

clearly assumed, and I questioned him closely regarding the strange antipathy evinced by his people towards the photographic apparatus. The lad feigned ignorance at first, but finally admitted that the 'Shamans' had always warned him against sitting for his picture, which, they averred, would be carried far away across the seas and probably be lost. In this case Noo-oona's destruction, body and soul, would surely and rapidly follow. I managed, however, to reassure my young friend (who, to do him justice, was not an ardent disciple of 'Shamanism'), and afterwards sent him a couple of his own photographs by the first whaler from San Francisco in the spring of 1897. I doubt, however, whether Noo-oona ever received these, for the ship by which they were despatched is now (Jan. 1898) hard and fast in the pack 70 miles north of Point Barrow, with a crew of forty doomed men; and Koari and his family had probably left Oumwaidjik for the interior before the 'Belvedere'[1]

[1] Most of the photographs of Tchuktchis that appear in this volume were taken by an officer of the Revenue cutter 'Bear,' during her yearly patrol cruise of 1894.

touched these on her way north to the Arctic Ocean and—destruction.[1]

The daylight was fast leaving us. By October 6 we were living by lamplight quite eighteen hours out of the twenty-four. We had up till this time kept a bright look-out for the Andrée Polar balloon, which we should have greeted with open arms; but I think we should have welcomed anybody if they only brought some decent food and a screw of smokable tobacco, for our supply of the latter was now almost exhausted. Talking of Herr Andrée, a rather amusing incident occurred here connected with his aërial expedition. While in New York we had been furnished by an American Geographical Society with a number of handbills, bearing a picture of the balloon and its occupants, for distribution among the Tchuktchis of Arctic Siberia. The bills were intended to prepare the natives for the aëronaut's advent, and to prevent any attack upon him caused by enmity or fear. I gave away, at Oumwaidjik, about a hundred of these leaflets, and one day saw a Tchuktchi

[1] See Appendix I.

youth (celebrated for his skill as a marksman) intently studying the picture of the balloon. I asked him (in his own language) what he would do if he saw it suddenly appear in the sky. 'Shoot it, of course!' was the immediate reply. I fear, therefore, that the well-meant efforts of the American geographers have been in vain (so far as North-Eastern Siberia is concerned), and can only trust that if, as I sincerely hope, the 'Eagle' and its intrepid inmates have crossed the Pole in safety, they may have given Oumwaidjik and its adjacent settlements a wide berth.

Two days after the above occurrence, or on October 8, the miserable monotony of our life was, for a few hours, relieved. Four polar bears —a mother and three cubs—were carried down on an ice floe from the Arctic, and washed ashore not three hundred yards from our hut. The whole village—men, women, children, and dogs —turned out, and a really exciting chase resulted in the shooting of the bears. They were then borne in triumph to Koari's house. Here their jaws were prised open with bits of seal-bone,

and their mouths adorned with beads and strips of bright-coloured cloth. This is done to give the slain animal an air of gaiety, and thereby appease the evil spirit that may come to avenge its death. A 'Shaman' performed the operation. Bear-flesh was a very pleasant change in our daily menu, but the allowance sent to us by Koari was very limited.

Polar bears are common enough around Oumwaidjik during the winter, and the year preceding our visit a woman was fiercely attacked by one of the brutes which was prowling around her hut at night-time. The animal mauled her severely about the scalp and shoulders; but, although nearly dead from fright and loss of blood, she eventually recovered. Bears are plentiful enough here, but there is an island far south of this, in Bering Sea, where they swarm like rats in a sewer. St. Matthew's Island is uninhabited by natives, but a winter's sojourn there would not only afford rare sport, but probably prove extremely remunerative to any one bold and hardy enough to undertake it. The following description of a comparatively recent

visit to this island by the explorer Elliott may, therefore, perhaps tempt some ardent sportsman to abandon India and Africa for a season, and try his luck (as I believe a party of Russians did a year or two ago) on this lonely, ice-girt hunting-ground.

'An old Russian record prepared us, on landing, to find bears here; but it did not cause us to be equal to the sight we saw, for we met bears —yea, hundreds of them. I was going to say that I saw bears here as I had seen seals to the south, but that, of course, will not do, unless as a mere figure of speech. During the nine days that we were busy in surveying this island we never were one moment, while on land, out of sight of a bear or bears; their white forms in the distance always answered to our search, though they ran from our immediate presence with a wild celerity, travelling in a swift shambling gallop, or trotting off like elephants. Whether due to the fact that they were gorged with food, or that the warmer weather of summer subdued their temper, we never could cause one of these animals to show fight. Its first impulse, and its

A BEAR-HUNT OFF OUMWAIDJK

last one, while within our influence, was flight—males, females, and cubs—all, when surprised by us, rushing with one accord right, left, and in every direction, over the hills and far away.

'After shooting half a dozen we destroyed no more, for we speedily found that we had made their acquaintance at the height of their shedding season, and their snowy and highly prized winter dress was a very different article from the dingy, saffron-coloured, greyish fur that was flying like downy feathers in the wind, whenever rubbed or pulled by our hands. They never growled, or uttered any sound whatever, even when shot or wounded. We could not have observed less than two hundred and fifty or three hundred of these animals while we were there. At our landing on Hall Island (a small islet close to St. Matthew) there were sixteen in full sight at one sweep of our eyes, scampering up and off from the approach of the ship's boat.'

The long weary nights and darkening days would have been bad enough to endure without additional anxiety from other causes; but we were now menaced by a danger that after sun-

down, and sometimes before, entailed constant vigilance. One night we were sleeping soundly, tired out after a hard day's seal shooting, when the door of our hut was burst open with a crash that sent the padlock flying, and Oyuràpok, his face streaming with blood, staggered into the room. A deep cut over the head had evidently sobered him, but the man was still in an advanced state of intoxication. When able to speak (for he was breathless with running), Oyuràpok told us that he had been set upon by the friends of a man whom he had killed the winter before, and who, had he not escaped, would undoubtedly have murdered him. Courage was clearly not this man's strong point, for he trembled like a leaf as I gave him a drink of water, and then walked to the door of the hut to try to replace the broken staples and bar out objectionable visitors. Just outside, to my surprise, Tingana and Mouga were crouching close against the wall, pale as ghosts and shaking with terror; but, as I was about to address them, the loud report of a rifle sent them scuttering like little rabbits into my hut, where Oyuràpok

was ruefully bathing his swollen and disfigured countenance. To my great relief, Noo-oona presently rushed in and explained the situation. Koari and some friends who had come in that day from a neighbouring village had drunk themselves into a state of frenzy, during which a Winchester rifle had been seized by one of his boon companions and discharged at the chief's head, happily missing him, but grazing a woman's arm. Noo-oona (who never indulged in whisky) begged us to extinguish the lamp, which had been relit on Oyuràpok's entry, and remain perfectly silent. Thus we listened for some moments of painful suspense, when the sound of angry voices was again raised, and a second shot rang through the darkness. Oyuràpok and his brother then rushed back to Koari's hut, leaving the women to our care. Half an hour later Noo-oona returned with the welcome tidings that no harm had been done, and that quiet had been restored, the proceedings having terminated with the helpless insensibility of his father, mother, and all their guests. We did not, however, feel much inclined for sleep until

daybreak, and, as a repetition of this performance (without the shooting) took place the following night, it was agreed to set a watch for the future, and rest by turns. This, indeed, was only the first of many drinking-bouts that took place before our rescue. Noo-oona informed us that one of Koari's guests had suggested rifling us while we slept, for white men always carried gold. Meeting this worthy next morning looking very sheepish and evidently suffering from severe headache, I deputed Noo-oona to inform him that he would find plenty of lead whenever he cared to pay us a visit, but that we were for the present unprovided with the precious metal, which was, in fact, the truth. We carried only Russian rouble notes, which are, like other paper money, useless to a Tchuktchi.

A Tchuktchi when drunk is more like a fiend than a human being. Our only safeguard at Oumwaidjik lay in the fact that the poorer portion of the community could not afford to buy whisky, and these men protected us, more or less, from the attacks of their drunken neighbours. Tingana and Mouga, too, always warned us

when an orgie was about to take place, and latterly we concealed ourselves in some friendly hut until it was over. Noo-oona, too, would have been a firm ally in case of need, and as we were well armed there was in reality but little to fear.

The dangerous character of the Tchuktchi when under the influence of drink is shown by the experiences of Captain Cogan, a well-known whaling skipper, who spent a winter among these people in St. Lawrence Bay, a short distance north of Oumwaidjik, on his ship the 'Kohola,' a few years ago. I am able, thanks to Mr. Aldrich, of New Bedford, Mass., to give the captain's story in his own words. He says:—

'I came up as first mate to the Arctic in the whaler "Kohola" of Honolulu, to winter under the charge of Captain Brummerhoff. We wintered about a quarter of a mile from the northern shore, in St. Lawrence Bay, Siberia. Soon after we anchored the sailors went ashore, stole some whisky from a native hut, got drunk, and came aboard resolved to take the ship. The Tchuktchi from whom they stole the liquor came aboard afterwards, and remained two or three days.

Meanwhile a strong gale sprang up. Some of the sailors jokingly told the native that they had seen the wind carry off his hut and destroy everything. This set the fellow crazy, and he insisted upon going ashore. We knew that it would be quite impossible to land him, and tried in vain to dissuade him from his purpose; but one day, while we were at dinner, he jumped overboard and started to swim ashore. I threw a line to him, but he brushed it away and made for the land. He had almost reached it, when he encountered young ice, lost his strength, and was drowned, his body never being seen again. After the gale subsided, his father and his two brothers came aboard to inquire for him. I, as mate, told them the truth; but the sailors, who sought revenge on the captain for fancied wrongs, told the Tchuktchis that the captain had stabbed their relative and thrown his body into the sea. They believed this, and ignored my story, and also told the captain that, if they ever caught him ashore, they would immediately kill him.

'Shortly after this I got together a dog-team and made some little expeditions, two to East

Cape and one down to Plover Bay. While I was away on one of these trips the captain traded for six reindeer. The natives took their trade—a keg of rum—in advance, and went ashore to get the deer, which were inland. I returned at this juncture, and the captain ordered me to go and get the deer; but when I learnt what trade he had given them, I suggested that we wait until the liquor and its effects had disappeared. But the captain was impatient, and said he would go himself, and, in spite of warning from the rest of us and one or two friendly natives, he rowed ashore and started off. We followed him with the glass, and soon saw that there was going to be trouble. We could see the deer returning and a crowd following and surrounding the skipper. We learnt afterwards that the friends of the drowned Tchuktchi, incensed at what they considered the captain's cruelty, followed him as soon as he landed and insulted and then assaulted him. The captain fired at them with his revolver, then threw it away and fled towards the ship, but was soon overtaken, pierced by an arrow, and then stabbed to death.

'Each year afterwards as I returned north I renewed my reward for a shot at one of the murderers, simply for effect, in case it should be necessary for other white men to winter there. After some years had elapsed, I went ashore at St. Lawrence, but had no sooner landed than the two brothers of the drowned man came running towards me with knives, but I kept them back with a revolver till I reached the boat. A year or two later these men sent word to me asking that peace should be declared. I agreed, and they came aboard the next day. Shortly after one of them went through the settlement while drunk with a rifle, and fired into every hut as he passed it. In one he narrowly missed killing a little girl, and her twelve-year-old brother seized a gun and shot him dead.' [1]

It was only on October 9 that I learnt by accident that the misery and monotony of the past five weeks had all been endured for nothing, and that we had no more chance of reaching our

[1] A hatred of white men is evidently not confined to the Tchuktchis, for a missionary was murdered by Eskimos as recently as 1895 at the Protestant Mission at Cape Prince of Wales, the murderers being, on this occasion, sober.

destination than the two monks, mentioned by St. Gerôme, who undertook to reach the spot where the earth and sky were supposed to meet. An old walrus-watcher, named Lew, who had once shipped on a whaler, and could therefore speak a few words of English, was in the habit of paying us daily visits at the conclusion of his day's work. It is perhaps characteristic of Tchuktchi craftiness that, so long as our tobacco lasted, Lew held his peace. But the fatal day arrived when we received our visitor empty-handed, and he then imparted a piece of information so calmly and logically that it bore the unmistakable impress of truth. The land journey to Anadyrsk was, he told us, quite impossible. If not, why did not the Oumwaidjik natives ever travel there by sleigh? During the summer many baidaràs sailed with furs and ivory to the Russian settlement by sea and river. Two of these boats had not even yet returned from this year's summer trip, and would now stay over at Anadyrsk until the following year, for it was quite impossible for their crews to return until navigation reopened. There was

no way by land. In the first place, no dog would face the terrible storms, and still less the terrific cold, for a month in the open without a scrap of firewood or fuel of any description. 'Man, dog, everyting die,' concluded Lew; adding, 'You get out of this or you die too,' as he took his departure.

We quite saw the force of our friend's kindly suggestion, but entirely failed to see how it was to be carried out. My first impulse was to seek out Koari and call him to account for his abominable treachery; but on second thoughts I abandoned this course, which would not only have been useless, but perhaps have subjected us to insults and annoyances that we had hitherto escaped by showing civility and good temper. I resolved, however, to test the accuracy of Lew's statements, and a few hours later carelessly questioned Koari as to the date of our departure for the interior. 'Byme-by you look,' was the imperturbable reply; 'no go now, plenty cold—no fire—man, dog—all die. Byme-by warm; six, seven moons stop Koari. Then all right—go.' 'By baidarà?' I asked, as urbanely as my feel-

ings would permit. 'Yes, by baidarà—seven moon more—all right.' And I could have struck the scoundrel in the face as the nameless horrors of an imprisonment in filth and darkness for seven or eight endless months were revealed in all their hideous reality. It was now plainly evident that this rascally Tchuktchi had never from the very first intended to carry out his contract.

What was to be done? Harding and I returned to the hut to gaze blankly at each other for a few moments, and then to set about racking our brains to find a way, however intricate, out of the dilemma; but the crucial question remained unanswered. We looked hopelessly through the grimy window at the mournful poverty-stricken huts looming through the dusk, and cursed the scheme that had landed us among them and their foul inmates. We turned our eyes seawards, where the foot ice, already over a mile in breadth, had come to stay, and our hearts sank within us at the thought that another ten days at the most would entomb us securely and hopelessly as a vault in Kensal Green

Cemetery. It was almost dark when an idea struck Harding, who silently tore down the flag that was hanging by the window. I watched him as he walked through the gathering gloom to the beach, and fixed it to an old whale rib that had once formed part of a hut. And, as the Union Jack fluttered gaily out on the evening breeze, I wondered whether the lady who had given it me in far-away England had ever realised that the lives of two men would one day depend upon that tiny bit of bunting. For one spark only (and a very dim one) now smouldered amid the ashes of our hopes—'The Whalers.'

CHAPTER XII

OUR RESCUE—THE 'BELVEDERE'—SAN FRANCISCO

Our hope of escape was a faint one, for the whaling ships had probably all left the Arctic Ocean by now; but a drowning man will clutch at a straw. Lew informed us by way of consolation that, out of the twelve or fifteen ships that annually went north, at least two or three were invariably (as he expressed it) 'broken,' or lost, which fact reduced our chance of rescue to infinitesimal proportions. In fact, the outlook could not well have been worse. It is truly providential, however, that the whaling catastrophe of 1897 did not occur the preceding year, for in that case nothing could have saved us from protracted hardships of a terrible description, if not from death itself.[1] To make matters worse, the damp in our hut had become so

[1] See Appendix I.

intolerable, and we suffered so severely from rheumatism, that we were compelled to move into Koari's walrus-hide hut, which, although infinitely worse as regarded pure air and seclusion, was at any rate weather-tight and always warm, at times even to suffocation. Koari at first evinced some suspicion at a prominent display of the Union Jack; but when I explained that our object was simply to attract the attention of some ship passing southward, in order to send a final letter home to our friends, the chief merely shrugged his shoulders and remarked that many moons must elapse before a vessel could possibly approach Oumwaidjik, which fact, judging from the condition of the ice, appeared unpleasantly probable.

Then followed a period of mental and physical suffering that I cannot even now look back upon without a shudder. There were days when it seemed as though one would never look upon civilised faces or hear a friendly voice again. Minutes seemed like hours in that foul, dark dwelling, which, towards night-time, assumed the appearance of a veritable Inferno, with its

naked occupants of both sexes, and its sickening odour of unwashed humanity, only less repellent to the senses than the nameless obscenities we were constantly compelled to witness to the eye. Here we lay for nearly a week, facing by turns the icy blast, in order to struggle to the beach and scan, with eager eyes, the cruel grey sea for a friendly sail, only to return more hopelessly each day to our grim resting-place, where a night of torture was generally in prospect on account of the vermin that now swarmed over us. About this time my troubles were greatly increased by a painful skin eruption which covered my entire body. I had suffered from it ever since September 20, but the irritation had gradually increased, and was now so intense that sleep, by night or day, was out of the question, save for a few minutes at a time. We had no remedy, and I honestly believe that another month without relief would have driven me out of my mind. I ascribed the complaint to poorness of blood, arising from our unwholesome diet; but it arose from a very different cause, and is a malady common enough among the

Tchuktchis, which I need not offend the reader's sense of refinement by mentioning. It is known as 'la gale' in the French language.

The weather got worse and worse as October crept slowly away, and the sun was now seldom visible, even during its brief presence, on account of dense fogs alternating with snowstorms. We eventually discontinued our visits to the beach, for they were, after all, useless, and a thorough wetting only increased our misery, if that were possible. There was absolutely nothing to think about, and still less to hope for, as we lay dozing under our filthy furs during the daytime, or tossed restlessly about after dark, watching for the sickly dawn that would bring us as wretched a day as the past night. Perhaps not quite, for the movement of men, the sound of human voices, were something to look at, and to listen to. Anything was better than to lie awake through those dark miserable nights, listening to the moaning of the wind, and the dull roar of the ice, as it gathered slowly and surely on the coast, and, hour by hour, immured us more hopelessly in this Arctic prison.

The daylight was now fast leaving us, and we had almost abandoned all hope of escape. When deliverance *did* come, it came, as usual, unexpectedly. It was about noon on the 18th of October, and a furious 'poorga' had been raging ever since the dawn. Even the natives preferred remaining in their huts to facing the cutting north-easter and blinding snow. I remember that day so well! I have cause to, for every trifling incident that took place is engraven on my memory. Only that morning I recollect saying to Harding: 'Well, it's all over now; we must make the best of it!' It cannot have been an hour after I made the remark that we heard, above the roaring of the gale, the sound of voices on the beach. They were raised as if in excitement, and, as the poor walrus-watchers are there in all weathers, two of the men jumped up, seized a rifle apiece, and dashed out of the hut. Presently one of them returned, his eyes ablaze with excitement. 'Amakpawit!'[1] he yelled, and throwing down his weapon rushed out again, followed by every soul in the hut. Then we knew,

[1] Tchuktchi, 'A steamer!'

and thanked a divine providence that we were saved.

But many hours of terrible suspense still lay before us. The wind was so tempestuous that we could scarcely make our way against it to the beach, where a crowd of natives had already assembled to watch the strange vessel as she laboured heavily along under steam and close-reefed topsails. It was a wild, weird scene. Before us stretched a rugged barrier of silvery ice, divided by a blue-black strip of open water, flecked with white billows, from the sullen grey sky. One could hear nothing but the howling of the gale, and the deafening roar of the ice as the floes dashed against each other in a mountainous sea. It seemed, for a few minutes of intense anxiety, as though the stranger would hold on her course, due south through Bering Straits. But when I saw the Stars and Stripes run up to the masthead, I knew that our rag of a Union Jack had been seen, and felt sure that we should not be left to our fate.

For three long anxious hours we stood and watched that stout little vessel as she struggled

for the bay, where there was certainly anchorage, but by no means safety. Safety lay in the open sea. The skipper of that ship must have known (as we knew) that he was risking not only the lives of all on board, but even his wife's safety, by lingering near this ice-trap. And yet, notwithstanding almost imminent peril, he never for a moment wavered on his mission of humanity. It was rapidly getting dark, however, when the ship anchored about two miles off the land, opposite a spot on the shore where a strip of open water rendered it possible to launch a boat. But the breakers were terrible, and the first baidarà was caught up like a nut-shell and dashed to pieces; a second shared the same fate; but a third was safely launched, and, amid the yells of the crowd, put bravely to sea.

Koari never left us for an instant. 'You no go,' he kept repeating; 'big water, you drown.' This looked extremely likely. We were indeed, on this occasion, 'between the devil and the deep sea.' But I knew that my old friend's anxiety was not on our own account, but his own. I think he had visions (since realised) of an

American vessel called the 'Bear'! Anyhow it was only by dint of threats with a revolver (which, with my journals and sketches, was the only thing we brought away) that we managed to embark on the third baidarà launched, jumping in when she was already on the crest of a huge roller, which nearly swept me off my feet. On this occasion only was I thankful that the Tchuktchis love whisky. Had it not been for the hope of being able to obtain some of that fiery liquid, not a man would have ventured out in such a sea.

During our passage to the ship, which occupied more than an hour, we lay in a heap, holding on like grim death to the bottom of the boat, which plunged and rolled like a wild thing, until we began to doubt whether it would not have been almost better to risk a possible death ashore than to court certain destruction afloat. I am convinced that nothing but a baidarà would have lived for five minutes in the waves that every moment threatened to engulf us, and that broke every now and then into our midst with a sickening

crash. We were literally oftener under the water than upon it, and once, when within a few yards of the whaler, a terrific sea swept us from stem to stern, carrying away our steersman, who, however, never let go of the gunwale, and clambered aboard again with marvellous presence of mind and agility. A line was soon afterwards thrown to us from the ship, and we were presently alongside and swarming up a rope so greasy with whale-blubber that my frozen hands could scarcely grasp it. But, with a superhuman effort, I dragged myself up the slippery side and over the low bulwarks, and a moment afterwards was shaking the hand of our brave preserver, who surveyed, with a half-puzzled, half-pitying expression, the fur-clad, miserable object before him, while the latter, more dead than alive, was scarcely able to realise as yet that the events of the past few hours were not a feverish dream, and that he and his faithful companion were really saved at last.

We had been rescued by the steam whaler 'Belvedere,' of New Bedford, Mass., whose name is as well known as the owner is popular

in the Arctic, which is saying a good deal. Whiteside, a tall pleasant-faced man of middle age, with handsome but slightly frost-bitten features, led us away below to a snug brightly lit little cabin, where we were soon retailing our misfortunes over the first palatable food we had tasted for many weary weeks. Mrs. Whiteside, a young, delicate-looking woman, presently joined us, and the good skipper then hurried away on deck, leaving his wife to attend to our wants. For the 'Belvedere' was already under weigh, and a rapidly falling barometer predicted a stormy night.

The 'Belvedere,' a barque-rigged steamer of 480 tons, was returning to San Francisco from a two years' whaling cruise in the Arctic Ocean. I could scarcely believe that the pretty, neatly dressed woman, chatting away so merrily beside us, had really shared her husband's perils and vicissitudes for two long years—twelve months of which had been passed securely locked in the ice off Herschel Island, near the mouth of the Mackenzie River. This voyage had, in fact, been Mrs. Whiteside's honeymoon trip, on which she

had started only a few days after her marriage. Our little hostess added that she had suffered ever since childhood from weak lungs, and so seriously that the doctors had permitted her to embark upon this cruise under the impression that she could scarcely live two years. But within the first few months of her stay in the Polar regions the cold pure air worked wonders; the improvement steadily continued, and Mrs. Whiteside was now returning to her home absolutely cured of a malady which is generally only alleviated by balmy breezes and southern skies.

We sat until late in the evening luxuriating in the pleasant warmth and light of our new surroundings, until it was time to turn into a couple of rough wooden bunks hastily knocked up by the carpenter, but wherein we slumbered, secure in the companionship of civilised beings, until noon the next day. Towards morning the fury of the gale increased, and by noon it was blowing a hurricane, which, however, did not raise a very heavy sea; for, although the 'Belvedere' was now a good twenty miles from the coast, we

were surrounded by ice. The floes were heavy and squeezed the old ship unpleasantly hard at times, but the sharp cracking noise made by her timbers, and so disquieting to an inexperienced ear, was, Whiteside told me, an additional proof of her stability and strength. We did not get quite clear for two days. A sharp look-out was kept from the 'crow's nest,' for the ice-blink[1] was constantly seen on the horizon, and long and frequent deviations from our course were rendered necessary by troublesome leads. About midday, however, on the 21st of October, when south of St. Lawrence Island, Whiteside gave a grunt of satisfaction, and shut his glasses with a snap, for only blue water now lay between us and San Francisco. 'We are well out of *that*, my friend,' said the cheery skipper, as he drew me towards the companion; 'now, let's go and have a drink!'

Although, after our Oumwaidjik experiences, the 'Belvedere' appeared to us in the light of a

[1] A curious appearance in the sky, like a thin streak of sunshine on the dullest, cloudiest day, which betokens the proximity of ice at sea.

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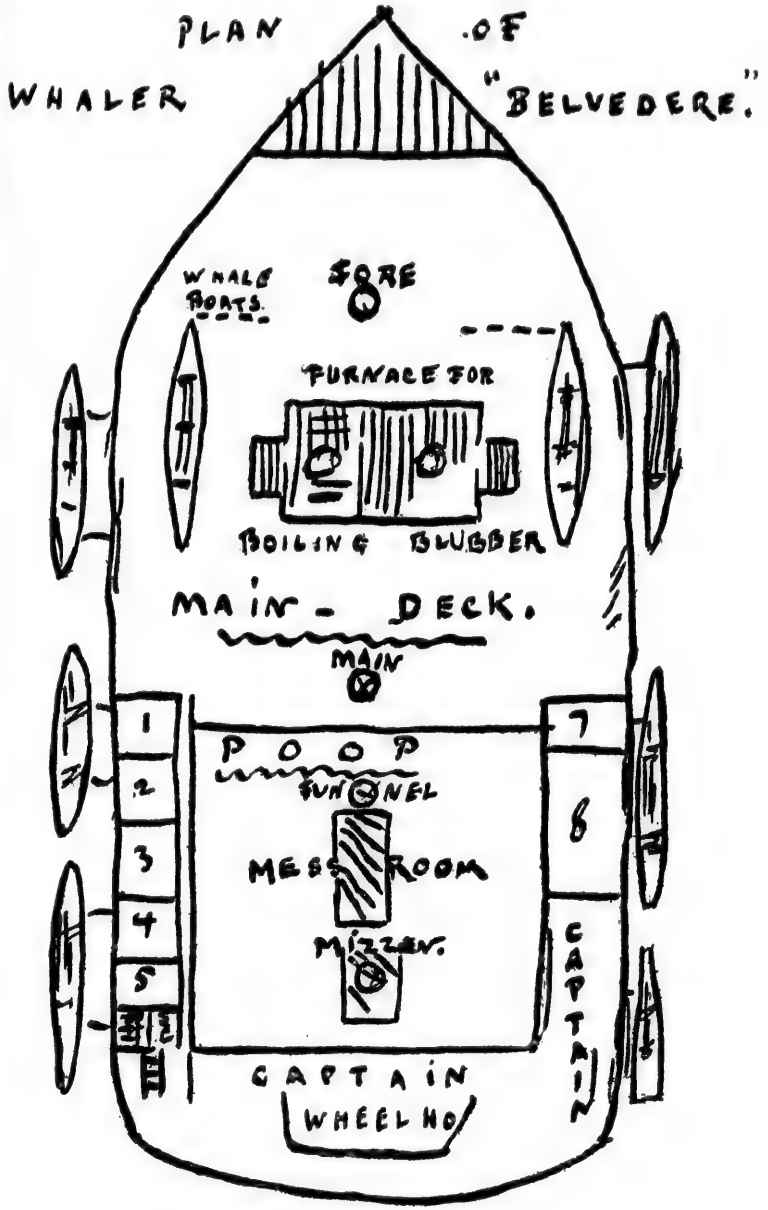


commodious and well-found yacht, life on a whaling ship is, under ordinary circumstances, anything but pleasant. Mrs. Whiteside's cabin was a tiny oasis of warmth and comfort, but once outside its cosy portals the *coup d'œil* was dirty and depressing in the extreme. Everything—the decks, bulwarks, and rigging—was coated with a greasy mixture of soot and blubber, as sticky as it was malodorous. This is caused by an operation known as 'trying out,' which was carried on, even during the most tempestuous weather, without cessation by day or night, all the way from Bering Straits to the Aleutian Islands. 'Trying out' is simply the converting of whale blubber into oil by boiling. This is done (as a glance at the accompanying sketch will show) on deck, in the fore part of the ship, where a brick furnace is built for the purpose. When the wind is anywhere but dead aft, the occupants of the quarterdeck naturally receive the full benefit of the smoke, which, as the fuel consists of the brittle refuse of already boiled blubber, is anything but agreeable to the average nostrils, although it

occasioned us (after Tchuktchi odours) but little inconvenience.

The 'Belvedere' had been exceptionally unfortunate until the last three weeks of her cruise, and was actually returning to San Francisco without a single fluke to show, when an almost phenomenal harvest of eleven whales was garnered, all within a fortnight, which was sending her into port as rich as, if not richer than, any whaler in the fleet.

The reader may not be aware that there are many kinds of whale, ranging from the 'Bowhead,' which fetches from 1,500*l.* to 2,000*l.*, to the sperm whale, generally valued at three to four hundred pounds. The dimensions of a 'Bowhead' are almost incredible to the inexperienced in whaling matters. The jaw of one captured by the 'Belvedere' measured thirty feet long and thirty feet high from top to base of mouth, when extended. And yet a whale's gullet is so small that it can barely swallow an apple, but feeds solely on a species of tiny shrimp and the most diminutive fish, which swim into his mouth, and are sifted, so to speak, through

a labyrinth of whalebone slats into his interior. Whalebone is, however, a somewhat misleading term for a substance which is not bone at all, but a kind of horn. Over seven hundred of these slats (some as much as twelve feet in length) are fixed in the upper jaw, and sweep backwards and out of sight when the mouth is closed, to straighten again when it reopens to form the sieve for fish food aforementioned. An ordinary 'Bowhead' will easily carry 100 barrels of oil at 131 gallons and yield 2,000 lbs. of bone. Whaling is therefore often a lucrative occupation, but much depends upon luck. The 'Belvedere' had captured 137 whales since the year 1881, thereby realising the sum of 164,000*l*.[1]

Whaling guns and explosive bombs are now used exclusively in whaling, and the dangerous

[1] The following are the measurements of a whale eighty barrels in size:—

Total length	47 ft.
Length of fins	8 „
Distance from rib end to spout holes	17 „
Thickest part of blubber	1 „ 4 in.
Length of longest 'slat' of bone	11 „ 1 in.
Number of slats—of bone	760
Weight of longest slat of bone	7 lbs.

harpoon method is a thing of the past. But a proof that the killing of a whale is, even now, occasionally perilous was shown by a long wooden case on the deck of the 'Belvedere.' This contained the body of Mr. Warren, the first boat-header[1] who had been killed by the last 'Bowhead' captured just before the 'Belvedere' came to our assistance, and whose remains were, in obedience to his wishes, being conveyed to America for interment. The monster, while pursued, had passed close to the boat, and dealt Warren a terrific blow with his fluke, smashing his hipbone into fragments and completely tearing open the abdomen. Nothing could be done for the poor fellow, who lingered in terrible agony for a few hours, till released by a merciful death. The fatal blow was probably accidental, for the 'Bowhead' is not generally vindictive. He differs in this respect from the Grey-back, or Devil Fish, which becomes mad with rage when pursued, and frequently follows and swamps a whale-boat.

[1] In whaling parlance a 'boat-header' is one who steers, a 'boat-steerer' one who stands in the bows of the boat with a whaling gun and, when near enough, 'strikes' the whale.

I learnt some strange things anent whaling on the 'Belvedere': the fact, for instance, that the crew of a San Francisco whaler never receives regular pay, but a share of the proceeds realised by the 'catch.' The captain takes one twelfth part, the chief mate one twenty-second part, and so on in reduced gradation to the able seamen, who each receive one eighty-fifth share of the gross receipts. I gleaned too, in confidence, from some of the sailors, that there are as many tricks and dodges connected with whaling as with the Turf, and that a whaling skipper, to succeed in his profession, must be as cute and artful as a fashionable jockey. When, for instance, whale-boats from a ship in the neighbourhood of another vessel are drawing cautiously near a whale, a favourite device of the unsuccessful whaler is to keep the propeller slowly moving. This at once scares the whale away, much to the astonishment of the pursuers, to whom the manœuvre is invisible. This is only one of many similar instances related to me anent the guile of their com-

manders by the forecastle blubber-hunters[1] of the 'Belvedere,' who, notwithstanding their hard life, were cheery, willing fellows, and apparently well satisfied with their lot.

The lower part of Bering Sea is, at all seasons, a terribly stormy place, and south of the Pribylov Islands a succession of adverse gales considerably retarded our progress. These gales are usually attended by fog and snowstorms, which render it necessary to keep away as far as possible from the land, which is generally invisible until a vessel is close on to it. One of the boat-steerers, a grizzled Arctic veteran, informed us that 'hereabout it was always as dark as a cupboard, and blowing 'ard enough to tear a dog's 'ead orf,' which assertion, if somewhat exaggerated, is, nevertheless, fairly descriptive of the kind of weather generally encountered off the Seal Islands late in the year. At St. Paul's, the larger of the two, there is an annual average of under fifty clear days, while it is impossible to land on either except on a very still day. Even in summer frequent violent

[1] A slang term for a 'whaling man' among sailors.

OUNALASKA, AND THE REVENUE CUTTER 'BEAR'

gales and dense fogs render this treacherous, shallow sea the bugbear of the mariner, who occasionally finds himself hard and fast ashore in clear weather, over a hundred miles from land of any description.

For twenty-four hours we lay hove-to, battling against a mountainous sea, that eventually carried away three out of our eight whale-boats. It was impossible to steam against it, for American whalers are only fitted with very inferior engines, and can, even in calm weather, barely steam their five knots an hour. But Whiteside rightly described his craft as a splendid sea-boat, for she rode the heavy seas like a duck, and sailed like a witch. I have often felt more anxiety on board a gigantic liner in a moderate gale than during the dirtiest weather on the tight, trim little 'Belvedere.'

The morning of October 25 finds us at anchor in the placid waters of Ounalaska harbour. We revel at the sight of the pretty village, nestling under green, grassy downs, with its neat houses and tiny church; for is not this a foretaste of the blessed civilisation we are nearing? Cattle

browse on the hill-sides, a tinkle of church bells is musically wafted to us over the water, and the rural, peaceful scene brings contentment to the soul. Indeed, it would need but a slight stretch of the imagination to fancy oneself on the shores of the Lakes of Thun or Interlaken, so homelike are our surroundings, bathed in the bright sunshine that so rarely gladdens these lonely wastes. And here, too, is our old friend the 'Bear,' on the point of sailing for San Francisco; but when I board her not one of my old shipmates recognises the man they landed in Siberia barely two months ago. This is, perhaps, scarcely surprising, for a glance in a mirror reflects a countenance that would do credit to the filthiest and most debased Tchuktchi.

The skin disease from which I had never ceased to suffer had now become so aggravated as to necessitate my removal to the 'Bear,' where, during the homeward voyage, I slowly regained my health and strength, under the care of Surgeon Lyall, whose kindness and attention, together with the hospitality of the commander and officers of the Revenue cutter, I can

never hope adequately to repay. And here at Ounalaska, the border-line between civilisation and the grim, ice-bound regions he knows so well, I bid farewell to the man to whose courage and generosity we undoubtedly owe our lives; for I am convinced that neither Harding nor I should have survived even another three months at Oumwaidjik. It would be ungrateful on my part not to add that Captain Whiteside was fully aware of the risks that he ran in taking us off that inhospitable shore, although, like all truly brave men, he makes light of the matter. Nevertheless, I can safely say that not one man in a hundred of *any* nationality would have acted as he did. When I add that, on arrival at San Francisco, this gallant sailor refused to take one farthing in return for his priceless services, the reader will not wonder that the name of Joseph Whiteside is one that I shall ever recall with feelings of the truest friendship and deepest gratitude to the day of my death.

There is little more to tell. Our voyage in the 'Bear' across the North Pacific is, as usual, a succession of gales and fogs: the weather,

in short, that may always be expected there from one year's end to another. On November 9 I reach my journey's end; not, alas! in the fair French city we all love so well, but still, under the circumstances, in a no less welcome haven: within the hospitable portals of the Golden Gate.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Outfit for One Man for a Journey from Juneau to Dawson City

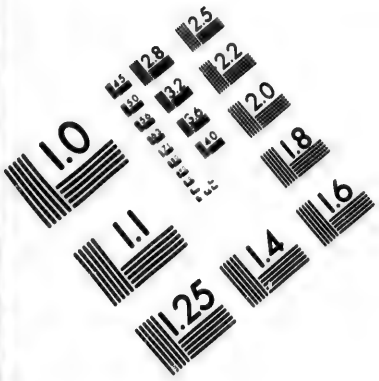
20 pounds of flour	4 cans condensed milk
12 „ „ bacon	5 pounds sugar
12 „ „ beans	1 „ tea
4 „ „ butter	3 „ coffee
5 „ „ vegetables (dried)	2 „ salt
	Pepper, mustard, tobacco

Utensils

1 frying pan	1 tea-pot
1 water kettle	1 knife and fork
1 Yukon stove	1 large cooking pan
1 bean pot	1 small „ „
2 plates	1 gold pan
1 tin drinking cup	

The following tools are necessary to build a boat on Lake Lindemann:—

1 jack plane	6 pounds of assorted nails
1 whip saw	1 pound of oakum
1 cross-cut saw	5 pounds of pitch
1 axe	150 feet of rope
1 hatchet	1 Juneau sled
1 hunting knife	



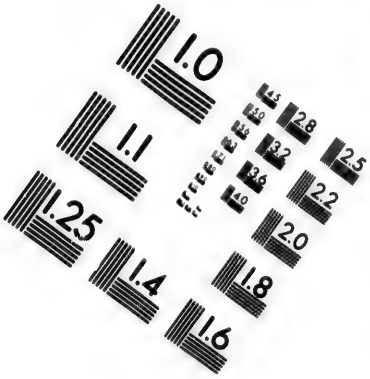
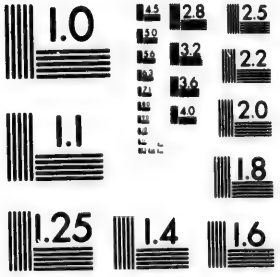
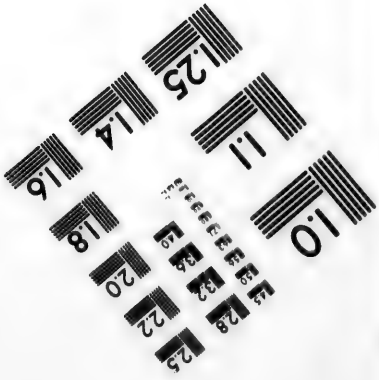


IMAGE EVALUATION
TEST TARGET (MT-3)





One good duck tent One oilskin sheet Mosquito netting Snow goggles	Essentials

N.B.—*Procure the above outfit at Juneau.*

Medicines, &c.

Cockle's pills	Arnica
Quinine (tabloids)	Sticking plaster
Chlorodyne	Bandages
Epsom salts	Lint
Goulard's extract	Cocaine (tabloids)
Ginger	

Patent medicines may be procured in the principal Yukon settlements.

APPENDIX B

Table of Distances from Dyea to Circle City

	Miles
Summit of Chilkoot Pass	14¾
Head of Lake Lindemann	23½
Foot of Lake Lindemann	27½
Head of Lake Bennett	28½
Foot of Lake Bennett	53¾
Caribou Crossing	56½
Foot of Lake Tagish	73¼
Head of Lake Marsh	78¼
Foot of Lake Marsh	97¼
Head of Grand Cañon	123
Foot of Grand Cañon	123¾
Head of White Horse Rapids	125¼
Takheena River	140
Head of Lake Le Barge	156
Foot of Lake Le Barge	184

	Miles
Hootalinqua River	216
Cassiar Bar	242
Big Salmon River	249
Little Salmon River	285½
Five Fingers Rapids	344
Rink Rapids	350
Pelly River	403½
White River	499½
Stewart River	509
Sixty-Mile Post	529
Dawson City	574
Fort Reliance	582½
Forty-Mile Post	628
Fort Cudahy	628¾
Circle City	798

APPENDIX C

Canadian Route to Klondike

The following route is said to be a feasible one by competent authorities in Canada. I therefore give the particulars as I received them. I have, personally, no acquaintance with this part of the country.

'There exists a further route to the Klondike than either of those via Dyea or St. Michael's. This is the one via Edmonton, which is over a long-used and well-beaten trail practicable throughout the year. It has also the advantage of running entirely through Canadian territory. The trail runs from Green Lake (603 miles by rail from Winnipeg) or from Athabasca Landing (1,030 miles by rail from Winnipeg). In summer the traveller can go nearly all the way to Dawson City by water, travelling down-stream with only a four-mile portage between the Yukon and Mackenzie rivers.

Fort McMurray is his first objective point. From here steamers belonging to the Hudson Bay Company run to Fort Macpherson. Having bought his stores here, he can go up Peel river to Trout river, and a creek flowing into that stream will take him to the portage mentioned. He can then float down another creek into Bear river, which flows into the Porcupine river, which latter is a tributary of the Yukon. He is then within easy reach of Dawson City.'

(If by 'easy reach' is meant a distance of about 250 miles, against a stream which can only be ascended with great difficulty by *towing* a boat at the rate of about a mile an hour.—H. DE W.)

APPENDIX D

MR. JOSEPH LADUE'S DIRECTIONS FOR STAKING OUT A MINING CLAIM

The method of locating a claim is essentially simple.

It is peculiar to the Klondike region because of the topography of the country. I refer of course to the claims staked out for placer mining, as up to this date this is the only mining attempted here. Throughout this section are numerous small streams or creeks, running through narrow valleys between the foot-hills. The prospective miner determines on which stream to hunt for the precious metal, and, having made a 'find,' he stakes out his claim in the following manner. In staking the claim the prospector must not exceed 500 feet up and down the creek, the general course of the valley. The width of the claim can run from base to base of the hills or mountains. If there are no claims located on this particular stream, the claim is

known as the 'Discovery Claim,' and the stakes used are marked 0. The next claim staked as you proceed *up* the creek is marked No. 1, as is the next claim going *down* the stream. There can be but two claims marked 1 on any one stream.

The four stakes being driven and each marked with your own initials, and the letters M. L. (meaning mining location), you must bound your claim with cross or end lines, and then proceed, within sixty days, to file the claim with the Government's Recorder at Dawson City. The Recorder at present is also the Gold Commissioner. In recording, affidavits must be made that the claim is properly staked, and date given, and gold been found.

The number of claim must also be given, and if it is not the discovery claim it must be mentioned, as, for instance, No. 1, or No. 1 above or below 'Discovery Claim,' as the case may be.

If a claim should be staked before gold is discovered thereon, the prospector has sixty days in which to prosecute the search for gold. If when this time has expired he is yet unsuccessful, he can no longer hold this claim, as the finding of the metal is absolutely necessary to the permanent holding of the claim.

The method for staking a quartz claim is similar. Here you lay out a claim 1,500 feet long by 600 feet wide. The stakes are marked as in placer claims, and the same rules govern in regard to finding of gold and filing the claims. The miner having filed his claim, it is necessary that he work the claim three consecutive months each year.

These requirements, though simple, are imperatively necessary for the protection of the miner; for, should a miner attempt to work a claim without first properly staking and recording the same, any one could come in,

work on the property, properly stake and hold the claim, and so compel the first man to leave. A prospector can file but one claim. Others he may acquire must be by purchase, and the bill of sale properly recorded at time of transfer. Should he abandon a claim he can, of course, locate another.

APPENDIX E

The Murder of Lieutenant Barnard, R.N.

In the spring of 1851 Lieutenant Barnard, a member of Captain Collinson's Franklin Search Expedition, proceeded to Nulato in search of information with regard to the fate of Sir John Franklin, and having traced certain rumours of the presence of white men in the far interior to the Koyukuk tribe, he expressed his determination to send for the principal chief of that tribe, who was then participating in the celebration of an annual festival about twenty-five miles from Nulato.

The chief in question was the most wealthy and influential in the whole region, and, being possessed of an exaggerated opinion of his own importance, took offence at the English officer's expression. The Russian traders who had lived for years at the isolated station of Nulato, and were much at the mercy of the surrounding warlike tribes, had always respectfully invited him to the fort whenever they desired his presence.

His Indian pride rose at the insult, and a council of warriors was called; the Shamans were also consulted, and it was finally concluded that all the Indians assembled should proceed to Nulato and demand satisfaction for the alleged insult. At this time a Russian employé, accompanied by one man, arrived on the spot,

having been instructed to induce the chief to meet Lieutenant Barnard at Nulato. As soon as his errand was known the man was doomed, and he was approached from behind, while seated on his sled, and instantly killed with a lance.

The Indian companion of the murdered trader was also killed. Immediately after committing this crime the warriors prepared for action and set out for Nulato. Only half a mile from the trading post was situated the native village of that name, containing about one hundred people. The Indian slain by the Koyukuks belonged to this village, and, in order to forestall retaliation, the invaders surprised the inmates in their houses, killing all with the exception of a few women and children. This was done so quietly that the Russians and their visitor at the station were not aroused. When the bloodthirsty savages finally reached the stockade they found the commander, Deriabin, who had just arisen, sitting behind one of the houses. He was approached stealthily from behind and stabbed in the back, dying immediately, without giving the alarm, and over his body the party entered the house where Lieutenant Barnard was reading. At the sight of the infuriated Indians the English officer seized a gun and fired twice without hitting any one, and a notorious Shaman, named Larion by the Russians, then stabbed the lieutenant in the abdomen, inflicting a mortal wound.

The Indians next turned their attention to the barracks, where the labourers lived with their native wives, but a few shots fired by the besieged induced them to retreat with the prisoners made in the village.

The murderous Shaman had been wounded in the mêlée, but managed to make his escape, and lived until a few years ago, both feared and hated by whites

and Indians, committing many horrible crimes and frequently inciting others to murder. Lieutenant Barnard was buried within a few yards of the stockade of Nulato, and a cross was erected over his grave.

APPENDIX F

Meteorological Report, Fort St. Michael, Alaska, for May, June, July, and August, 1896

Month	Thermometer		Days		
	Lowest	Highest	Fair	Cloudy	Rainy
May	0	53	13	13	5
June	27	62	12	13	5
July	34	67	7	11	13
August	34	59	1	16	14
Total	. .	. .	33	53	37

APPENDIX G

Prices of Furs in London exported from Alaska

1. Silver fox, from 6*d.* to 105*l.*
2. Marten, from 1*s.* to 2*l.* 10*s.*
3. Beaver, from 6*s.* to 2*l.* 5*s.*
4. Cross fox, from 2*s.* to 3*l.* 7*s.*
5. Mink, from 1*d.* to 1*l.* 3*s.*
6. Red fox, from 1*s.* to 15*s.* 6*d.*
7. Arctic (white) fox, from 1*s.* 6*d.* to 15*s.*
8. Lynx, from 2*s.* 6*d.* to 12*s.* 6*d.*

Brown bear, from 3*s.* to 7*l.* 10*s.*
Grizzly bear, from 3*s.* to 8*l.* 10*s.*
Black bear, from 2*s.* to 7*l.*
Polar bear, from 20*s.* to 8*l.* 10*s.*

Reindeer, wolf, and squirrel are not exported from St. Michael's, but are largely used there as clothing.

N.B.—The above are prices *in the rough*. There is considerable *waste* in preparing for use, and the expenses connected with cleaning and setting up are enormous.

APPENDIX H

GLOSSARY OF TCHUKTCHI LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT VILLAGE OF OUMWAIDJIK, CAPE TCHAPLIN, N.E. SIBERIA, BERING SEA.[1]

1	*Atajak*
2	*Mailop*
3	*Piniayout*
4	*Shtemet*
5	*Takhlimat*
6	*Awindlit*
7	*Mara awindlit*
8	*Pinia ounlulut*
9	*Shtama ounlulut*
10	*Koullia*
11	*Ataja-oumlabok*
12	*Mailop-oumlabok*
20	*Yu-oumlabok*
Yes	*Ah-ah*
No	*Naka*
Good-day	*Tanakhoom*
A man	*Youk*
A woman	*Aranak*
A boy (child)	*Tanakhwak, Tanokwak*
To eat	*Nahilta*
To drink	*Mougwe*

[1] Quite distinct from languages spoken by inland deermen.

A steamer	*Amakpawit*
A dog	*Klikmak*
A duck	*Kawak*
A deer	*Gouwiniak*
A walrus	*Ayivak*
A seal (big)	*Maklak*
A seal (small)	*Nakshak*
A whale	*Arivak*
A fish	*Ekatliak*
A hand	*Eehit*
A foot	*Eetigak*
Bread	*Nakukshak*
Tobacco	*Abouktawak*
Good	*Pinechtok*
Plenty	*Oulakhtok*
Parka (skin coat)	*Atkouk*
Boots (deerskin)	*Kamuk*
An axe	*Kashkalimawak*
A wolverine	*Kavtchik*
A bear	*Nanok*
A black bear	*Kainga*
A knife	*Simkatwhaïla*
A house	*Mountarak*
A pouch	*Akouiav-ak*
Deerskin breeches	*Koukhli*
Aurora borealis	*Keroyak*
Cool	*Aklava*
Too cool	*Sapokhnak*
A lamp wick	*Pokak*
Slow	*Akfatnak*
Quick	*Soukwaihlouten*
I do not know	*Tcha ami*
Warm	*Poukshla*
Cold	*Holtanga*
Who is that?	*Kinangawa?*

Wind	*Anokwa*
South	*Ikauak*
East	*Asivak*
West	*Pakwadlia*
North	*Kotfwak*
Alaska	*Nagurok*
Oomiak (Alaska)	*Angiak* (*Noukamok*)
Wet	*Nokoukhnak*
Smoke	*Pouyouk*
Smoke a pipe	*Meloukhtok*
Rain	*Nepshiok*
Snow	*Kanit*
A sleigh	*Kamiyak*
A whip	*Kakshaou*
A pipe	*Kwinga*
Matches	*Nakhsett*
Dog harness	*Arlou*
You lie	*Eklinia kootung*
Five months	*Tankith-tashlimat*
One month	*Atajak tankikh*
Keep still	*Napéré*
Water	*Mok*
Salt water	*Tayuk*
To break a sleigh	*Ayemok*
To break a boat	*Tsiekoutok*
Sick	*Akhnikhtunga*
Good night	*Hantig*
A big man	*Antokhpok*
Little fish (October)	*Ekashliwak*
A spoon	*Askoltuk*
Get out	*Agoliaketuk*
My	*Kwanga*
My daughter	*Kwanga panika*
My pipe	*Kwanga kwinga*
The stars	*Aradlakatak*

Ice	*Sikou*
Snow	*Anio*
Rain	*Nouptchouk*
Fog	*Tangitok*

APPENDIX I

The Icebound Whalers

Eight vessels now known to have been caught

San Francisco, October 29.—Eight whalers, instead of five, as previously reported, are fast in the ice of Point Barrow, and on at least one of them, the 'Jeannie,' there will be great suffering. Not only is the ship so far away that there is no chance to take supplies to her, but her men have no appliances with which to get to shore over more than 150 miles of ice. The full list of the vessels known to be fast, in addition to the 'Jeannie,' are the 'Newport,' 'Orca,' 'Jesse Freeman,' 'Belvedere,' 'Fearless,' 'Rosario,' and 'Wanderer.' The news of this state of affairs in the whaling fleet was brought out of the Arctic by the steamer 'Karluck,' which was barely able to reach free water with her seven whales.

The catch of the 'Karluck' is one of the heaviest of the season, although all of the whalers who were spoken had made some progress. The 'Karluck' reports that none of those vessels which are stuck in the ice are close to any supply station, and that there will be trouble for the men on board them is certain. The ships are separated, and no communication was had with them by the steamer which escaped. The 'Karluck' left St. Michael on the 14th, and is expected to arrive here in a few days.

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